The New Criterion

September 1994

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

Notes & Comments, 1
"The New Republic" at 80 *by Hilton Kramer*, 4
America's cultural revolution *by Roger Kimball*, 12
The Academy in the '20s *by Cynthia Ozick*, 19
Debasing Brancusi *by Sidney Geist*, 37
Poems *by Charles Tomlinson & F. D. Reeve*, 46

Art *by Karen Wilkin*, 50; **Exhibition notes** *by Mario Naves & Eric Gibson*, 54; **Theater** *by Mark Steyn*, 57; **Dance** *by Laura Jacobs*, 62; **The media** *by James Bowman*, 65

Books: *Robert David Thomas* "With bleeding footsteps": Mary Baker Eddy *reviewed by Marc M. Arkin*, 71; *Sarah Orne Jewett* Novels & stories *& Paula Blanchard* Jewett: her world & her work *reviewed by Louis Auchincloss*, 76; *Grace Paley* The collected stories *reviewed by Brooke Allen*, 80; Two new books about political correctness *reviewed by Terry Teachout*, 82; *William Cobbett* Peter Porcupine in America *reviewed by Richard Brookhiser*, 85; **Shorter notices** *by John Simon & Donald Lyons*, 88; **Notebook** *by Mark Helprin*, 91

Volume 13, Number 1, $4.75

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Published monthly except July and August by The Foundation for Cultural Review, Inc., 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019, a nonprofit public foundation as described in Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue code, which solicits and accepts contributions from a wide range of sources, including public and private foundations, corporations, and the general public. ISSN 0734-0222. September 1994, Volume 13, Number 1. Subscriptions: $36 for one year, $65 for two. Outside the United States, add $7 per year. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: send changes of address to The New Criterion, 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019. Copyright © 1994 by The Foundation for Cultural Review, Inc. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 2020 Superior Street, Sandusky, OH 44870. (800) 221-3148. Available in microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. All correspondence should be addressed to The New Criterion, 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019. (212) 247-6980. Notice of nonreceipt must be sent to the Office Manager within three months of the issue date.

Advertising: Galleries & fine arts: Kate Shanley, 799 Broadway, New York, NY 10003. (212) 477-4905.
Publishers & others: Richard A. Vaughan/Ann Moreland, 129 Phelps Avenue, Rockford, IL 61108. (815) 398-8569.

The New Criterion is designed by Alvin and James Eisenman. It is set in 10-point Galliard and is printed by Science Press in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, USA.

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Notes & Comments: September 1994

Loathsome performances

When, in our May issue, we called attention in this space to the now much-discussed Ron Athey performance in Minneapolis last March, this unlovely episode in American cultural life had not yet erupted into the national scandal it has since become. Now that it has become a public issue—and properly so, in our opinion—it is important that we understand the nature of the response that this bizarre event has met with. For in some respects, the way certain figures in public life have responded to this scandal—we particularly have in mind Jane Alexander, the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington; Kathy Halbreich, the director of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; and Frank Rich, the Op-Ed columnist for *The New York Times*—is almost as appalling as Ron Athey's ideas about art.

For latecomers to the story, suffice it to say that on March 5 the Los Angeles performance artist Ron Athey, well-known in performance-art circles for his interest in what he calls "blood sports," was brought to Minneapolis by the Walker Art Center to stage one of his bloody rituals in a local cabaret. This involved Athey, who is H.I.V.-positive, cutting an abstract design into the flesh of another man, then having the man's blood blotted onto paper towels; the blood-stained towels—now magically transformed into "art prints," according to the folks at the Walker Art Center—were then attached to a clothesline and suspended over the heads of the audience in a very confined space. (Attendance was limited to one hundred persons.) The H.I.V. status of the man whose blood was shed was unknown to the audience—and, at the time of the event, was indeed unknown to the Walker curator who brought Athey to Minneapolis. (Mercifully, it turned out to be negative.) As a finale, two female assistants then pierced Athey's arm with some thirty hypodermic needles and applied acupuncture needles to his shaved scalp, which produced more blood. Two members of the audience fainted, ten others departed while the performance was still in progress, and others were reported to be in a state of panic.

On March 24, Mary Abbe—the art critic and art-news reporter at *The Minneapolis Star Tribune* and herself a former press officer at the Walker Art Center—wrote an account of the event based on interviews with people who were there and with officials at the Walker. Her front-page story promptly caused an immense uproar, for it turned out that the performance had been funded, in part, by money granted to the Walker by the NEA. As a result, questions were once again raised in Congress about the NEA itself, and

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cuts in the agency's budget were proposed as a means of disciplining its activities.

It was then that the top brass at the NEA and the Walker Art Center and their friends in the press went into action. What their principal response consisted of, however, was not a defense of Ron Athey's performance, which they refused to discuss in detail lest further gruesome details be brought to light. Instead they mounted an attack on Mary Abbe.

Jane Alexander explained to members of Congress that the article in the *Star Tribune* had misrepresented the Athey performance —a charge she had neglected to make to the editorial board of the paper when she met with them soon after Abbe's article was published. Kathy Halbreich and the Walker's public-relations director, Margaret Patridge, made similar charges, but—as David Schimke wrote in a very good article in *The Twin Cities Reader*, a local "alternative" paper —"when asked to point to factual errors in the [Abbe] piece, neither Halbreich nor Patridge can get specific."

In other words, both Alexander and Halbreich were quite prepared to savage Abbe's professional reputation in an effort to save their respective institutions from the political fallout of their own follies, while neither proved willing to go into detail about the Athey performance itself. As Schimke wrote in his *Twin Cities Reader* article in July: "You can talk for hours with Halbreich and still not come away with an honest artistic appraisal of his work."

Meanwhile, Frank Rich joined in this contemptible attempt to malign the reputation of a liberal journalist who, as it happens, had a record of defending the NEA in the past. He wrote two separate pieces for the Op-Ed page of *The New York Times* attacking the accuracy of Abbe's work and adding charges of "homophobia" to the indictment.

This, of course, is the way the NEA, its beneficiaries, and its friends in the press have long responded to outrages committed in the name of public funding of the arts—by a combination of denial and counter-attack and a complete refusal to be accountable to the public which provides the agency with its funds. In the case of the Ron Athey uproar, moreover, this refusal of accountability involved a public-health issue. While Alexander and Halbreich and Rich refused to acknowledge that the Athey performance had ever posed a public-health problem, David Schimke went to the trouble of checking with the Minnesota Department of Health, whose public-information officer told him "the department never would have sanctioned the event" if it had been informed about it in advance, which it wasn't.

While the sheer loathsomeness of the Ron Athey performance is reason enough for the NEA to refuse its support of such things, the manner in which the current chairman of the NEA chose to deal with the matter is in some respects even more despicable than the performance itself. And that both a reputable museum director and a senior journalist for *The New York Times* would join in this attempt to suppress the truth about this loathsome event is a measure of the level to which the whole discussion of public funding of the arts has now descended.

Nostalgie de la boue

The caption underneath the photograph on the front page of *The New York Times* for Sunday, August 14, explained the squalor: "People dancing in a pit of mud." "Elsewhere," the accompanying article pointed out, "people could be found completely covered in mud." No, the scene was not from an anthropologist's notebook or a refugee camp in Rwanda: it was from Woodstock '94, the up-to-date reprise of the infamous music festival that, for friends and foes alike, came to epitomize the boutique hedonism of the 1960s.

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The original Woodstock was hailed by the starry-eyed as a great triumph of youthful idealism. Despite the torrential rains (there was plenty of mud in 1969, too, which made the 1994 mud bath seem to some like an act of Providence), half a million people came together for three days in a spirit of non-violence, anti-materialism, and brotherly love. Or so goes the usual fairy tale. Charles Reich's mind-numbing best seller from 1970, *The Greening of America*, which is discussed elsewhere in this issue, was at once an instance of and a cheerleader for this fairy tale. Reich enthused about the heightened "consciousness" of a "new generation" that "rejects the idea that man's relation to man is to be governed primarily by law or politics, and instead posits an extended family in the spirit of the Woodstock Festival." Never mind all that poisoned LSD, the drug overdoses, and the shattered lives: the spectacle of five hundred thousand teenagers squirming in the mud, some of them naked, many drugged to the gills, does a pretty good job of summing up what "the Sixties" was all about. Add the mindless political slogans, the anti–Vietnam War fervor, and the electrified Dionysian cacophany that Jimi Hendrix *et al.* provided and you've got the complete recipe. Charles Reich was correct in thinking that the consciousness of the "new generation" he lauded found its objective correlative in Woodstock.

The times seem very different today, of course, but the success of the '94 festival shows that in many ways the spirit that made Woodstock really did triumph. In the weeks leading up to the event, the newspapers and other media engaged in a fevered orgy of nostalgia and marketing hype. Public television channels across the country repeatedly aired the movie version of the original festival. In a long, solemn article previewing the "music" scheduled for the weekend (one of many bulletins he provided), the rock critic for *The New York Times*, Jon Pareles, specially recommended the bands Nine Inch Nails and Metallica, and noted that other star acts, including Arrested Development and Porno for Pyros (no, we're not making up the names), would join such old timers as Santana and Joe Cocker. In the event, more than three hundred thousand people attended this exercise in generational nostalgia, though exactly how many forked over the $135 ticket price (up from $18 in 1969) is unclear. As of Saturday, there was one death reported and hundreds of drug overdoses to cope with; by Sunday, emergency medical workers compared the scene to "a war zone" as doctors treated a new patient every twenty seconds. Sanitation was drastically improved over '69, however, as was security: though the same three individuals who organized the original Woodstock festival also organized Woodstock '94, they had learned some lessons. This time there were twelve hundred security guards and miles of fence to keep out the rabble who lacked tickets and to help ensure that this new celebration of peace, love, and non-materialistic idealism proceeded on a firmer financial foundation than its predecesor. The promoters declared the festival a great success. And why not? According to *The New York Times*, once inside the gates there were "innumerable things to buy." To expedite the good feelings, cash machines and concessions selling "Woodstock scrip" were on hand to supply fans with the wherewithal to purchase the ubiquitous Woodstock T-shirts and $11 slices of pizza. Major credit cards were also accepted.

Marx famously said that great historical events tend to occur twice: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. What would he have said about a farcical tragedy that came back as a black comedy?

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Life after liberalism: "The New Republic" at 80

by Hilton Kramer

Reading *The New Republic* these days, I often think of the late Lionel Trilling. It was Trilling's fondest wish to remain, in everything he thought and wrote, a paragon of enlightened liberalism. He had, of course, sharply criticized the liberalism of his own generation—the liberalism that in the 1930s and 1940s had proved to be so easily captive to Stalinist influence. Yet it was never his intention to repudiate liberalism itself. He set out to reform it, to make it more responsive to the complexities of experience and less doctrinaire in its formulas of salvation. His models in this endeavor were Arnold and Mill—especially the Mill who had written about the conservative Coleridge and the radical Bentham with such undeceived intelligence.

That his own criticism of liberalism was likely to meet with resistance and opprobrium from the radical Left was a risk that Trilling was willing to take. Indeed, to incur the wrath of the Stalinists was in those days, for a liberal of Trilling's persuasion, a badge of honor. It seems not have occurred to him, however, that he might be put down as a conservative by non-Stalinist liberals because of the very nature of his attack on liberalism. When the charge was made—and not by any Stalinist hack but by Joseph Frank, a critic of impeccable liberal credentials—Trilling was stunned. There is a sense in which it can truly be said that he never recovered from the demoralization he suffered as a result of this attempt to characterize his whole approach to culture and politics as essentially conservative in spirit. Trilling died without responding to the charge, and the debate over the exact nature of his conservative liberalism—or, if you like, his liberal conservatism—has continued to haunt his posthumous reputation.

The reason I think of Trilling while reading *The New Republic* is that this celebrated journal of liberal opinion nowadays offers us almost weekly bulletins on what might be called the Trilling dilemma: how to function as a critic of liberalism without being stigmatized as a conservative. *The New Republic*, which this year observes its eightieth anniversary, still presents itself to its readers as a bastion of liberal thought. Yet its expression of that thought, which on many issues is now all but indistinguishable from certain aspects of neoconservative thought, is frequently marked by an obvious dread of being seen—especially by liberals further to the left than *The New Republic*—to be deviating from the permissible limits of liberal orthodoxy. In the vain hope of warding off such charges, the magazine conducts a sort of intermittent border warfare against some of the neoconservatives who are its natural allies—often, in fact, its only allies—against the radical Left. At the same time, however, the magazine publishes certain neoconservative writers—usually in its book-review pages—on subjects that are safely distant from party politics. The editors do not mind borrowing a little intellectual authority from

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the neoconservative camp so long as it is not seen to compromise the magazine's liberal loyalties.

As to what those liberal loyalties now consist of, it is sometimes difficult to say, especially since the departure of Hendrik Hertzberg and Sidney Blumenthal for Tina Brown's left-wing political salon at *The New Yorker*. For the better part of twenty years—since Martin Peretz acquired ownership of *The New Republic* in 1974—the magazine has seemed deliberately to organize its staff and its contributors into opposing liberal factions, some more liberal, some more conservative, some merely more facetious, than others. This carefully modulated deviation from liberal orthodoxy, which is mainly but not exclusively confined to the realm of foreign policy, inevitably brought cries of protest from the magazine's left-liberal constituency when it resulted in outright support for some Reagan administration initiative—as it did, for example, in the case of the Nicaraguan *contras*. But since Hendrik Hertzberg, who alternated for a time with the peripatetic Michael Kinsley in the editor's chair, could always be counted on to supply the requisite take-no-prisoners assault on Reagan himself, the protests of the loyal opposition at the magazine never amounted to much. Kinsley himself generally assumed the lighter burden of amusing the magazine's yuppie liberal constituency—a group more interested in style than substance—with his flippant patter on domestic political affairs. While Hertzberg's liberalism wore a frown of scornful disapproval, Kinsley's displayed the self-satisfied smile of the perennial undergraduate scoring points against his elders.

Even if these upscale liberals had really wanted to break with *The New Republic* over its much-discussed turn to the right, where could they have gone? *The Nation*, which had long been *The New Republic*'s principal rival among left-liberal weeklies, had further degenerated into a sectarian organ reminiscent of the bad old days when radicals still worshiped at the altar of revolution. *The New York Review of Books*, now *The New Republic*'s only real competition for the loyalty of campus liberals, was already oversupplied with anti-conservative savants, and in any case preferred writers with more glittering intellectual credentials. Sidney Blumenthal did a stint at *The Washington Post*, to be sure, but he soon hurried back to the more salubrious purlieu of *The New Republic*, where he waited for something better to show up. Until Tina Brown made it safe—and far more lucrative, too—to practice radical-chic journalism without risk or restraint, the opportunities were limited for the left-liberal mandarins at *The New Republic*. When it came time for Kinsley to decamp, he at last found his true vocation, bringing his Ivy League brand of liberal facetiousness to the world of the television talk show, where it is accepted practice for glib phrases to serve as a substitute for thought. By and large, when the folks on Marty Peretz's left flank departed the magazine, it was more a matter of opportunity than of political principle.

Still, it must be said that, whatever the magazine's flaws, failures, and contradictions have been during the last twenty years of publication, Marty Peretz has succeeded in breaking the mold of the traditional liberal weekly by the changes he brought to *The New Republic*. He has weaned the magazine away from its infantile Leftism, closed the door on any doubts as to what the Cold War was really all about, cast a critical eye on the new politics of racial quotas and preferments and the judicial arguments supporting them, kept a prudent distance from the excesses of feminist radicalism, and in general purged the pages of *The New Republic* of its abject obeisance to the political and cultural legacy of the Sixties. While allowing his left-flank editors and contributors plenty of space in which to vent their dissent from the magazine's new course and vilify those outside the magazine who uphold views that in some cases are virtually identical with those that had now become central to *The New Republic* itself, Peretz went a long way toward disembarrassing the magazine of its disreputable political past. Not the whole way,

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to be sure, but a large part of the distance to be traversed, given the appalling political history of *The New Republic* since the Thirties.

From Malcolm Cowley's praise of the enlightened "jurisprudence" governing the Moscow Trials in the 1930s to Richard Gilman's pusillanimous surrender to black nihilism in Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* in the 1960s, the old *New Republic* had a pretty dismal record when it came to resisting or even comprehending the nature of the left-liberal fashions of its time. Under three of its most notoriously compromised editors—Bruce Bliven, Michael Straight, and Henry A. Wallace—the magazine remained, with only occasional exceptions, a complaisant supporter of Soviet foreign policy during the worst years of Stalin's murderous reign.

It is one of the merits of *The New Republic Reader*, which Dorothy Wickenden has edited to mark the magazine's eightieth anniversary, that it acknowledges the reality of this shameful political past both in the introduction and in the selection of texts.[1] It doesn't, to be sure, attempt to give us a comprehensive account of this history or dwell on the role played by *The New Republic*'s pro-Soviet line in the political life of the Thirties and Forties—a role that was finally reduced to macabre political comedy when, in 1946, the year in which Churchill issued his warning about the "Iron Curtain" that Stalin was then imposing on Eastern Europe, the magazine's proprietor, Michael Straight, appointed as editor the most eminent fellow-traveler in the country, Henry A. Wallace, who had been Vice President during F.D.R.'s third term.

Straight was not lacking in Stalinist credentials of his own. As Ms. Wickenden delicately points out, Straight "fell in with the Soviet agents Anthony Blunt and Guy Burgess" during his student days at Cambridge University in the Thirties. She never actually explains that Straight was inducted into the Blunt–Burgess spy ring and for a time reported regularly to his Soviet "control." In a parenthetical aside, she acknowledges that while Straight claimed to have become an ex-Communist by the Forties, his "own loyalties, however, remained a little murky. . . . In March 1951 [while the Korean War was still raging], Burgess ran into Straight in Washington, D.C., and admitted that he had passed along to Moscow the U.S. plans to advance into North Korea." Yet Straight, who had once served as one of F.D.R.'s speech writers, did not disclose this betrayal to American authorities until long after the event, and then only because disclosure was a condition of securing a job he wanted with the Kennedy administration.

Ms. Wickenden, who was formerly *The New Republic*'s executive editor and is now the national affairs editor of *Newsweek*, is sometimes a little murky herself in explaining, or failing to explain, how the magazine's liberalism adjusted to the shocks of the Hitler–Stalin pact and the outbreak of the Second World War. She professes astonishment that the *The New Republic* "counseled fatalism and restraint"—in other words, non-intervention—"in the face of Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco" at the onset of the war, as if this had not been the Communist Party line as a result of the Hitler–Stalin pact right up to the day in 1940 when Hitler's armies invaded Russia. Then, of course, the party line changed, and so did *The New Republic*'s. But then, Ms. Wickenden isn't very clear about the war itself. She seems to be under the impression that in September 1939 "the war began with Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia." Apparently she is still unaware of what happened to Poland in September 1939.

Notwithstanding these egregious confusions, however, Ms. Wickenden has included just enough in this *Reader* to give newcomers to the subject a glimpse of what *The New Republic*'s liberal fellow-traveling line entailed in the heyday of Stalin's influence on American intellectual life. In this department, the *Reader*'s prize exhibit is undoubtedly Bruce Bliven's "Letter to Stalin," from

1 *The New Republic Reader: Eighty Years of Opinion and Debate*, edited by Dorothy Wickenden; A New Republic Book/Basic Books, 518 pages, $28.

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the issue of March 30, 1938. As the infamous Moscow Trials were completing their course and the Great Terror continued to sweep millions of lives in its path, this abject liberal acolyte of the Soviet experiment made an open appeal to Stalin to, as we would say today, *improve his image*!

Bliven was worried, you see, that, as he wrote to Comrade Stalin with a heavy heart, "the series of trials of traitors, spies and saboteurs has had a bad effect on world public opinion." To remedy the situation, Bliven made four proposals. "I suggest, first," he wrote, "that in future treason trials, a procedure should be followed more compatible with that of countries under the Anglo-Saxon or the Roman law tradition." Then, in an attempt to soften so bold a suggestion, Bliven added: "It may be unjust of the Americans, for example, to suspect that torture is used in these cases; but in the United States there is a nationwide and long continued tradition of police brutality, of extorting confessions by torture in every sort of case from petty larceny to murder. It is inevitable that this country should look with suspicion upon confessions obtained in secret hearings, however plausible these confessions may be on their face."

It gets better, for Bliven's second point, or plea, was to suggest "that in the future you shall not merely present to the world testimony which many people in all countries find incredible, without some attempt to make its credibility apparent." Then, getting really desperate, Bliven added: "If these proceedings are not convincing, there is no point in holding them"—an observation that tacitly acknowledged that the Moscow "treason" trials weren't judicial proceedings at all but political show trials which were proving to be embarrassing to the faithful. What liberal acolytes of Stalinism like Bliven could not bring themselves to comprehend was that the trials were never meant to be convincing—not about the defendents' guilt, anyway. They were an instrument of terror, and they served their purpose with all the cold-blooded efficiency that Stalin meant for them to have.

Bliven's utter incapacity to understand the world he was writing about was made fairly explicit when, in his third recommendation to Comrade Stalin, he urged him to "abolish the death sentence for these and all other crimes." By March 1938, Stalin had already caused the deaths of millions of innocent people, and in the years that were left to him he would cause the death of millions more. This was something that the editor of the great liberal journal simply could not fathom—and neither, apparently, could the magazine's loyal liberal readers. By such people, Communism was still looked upon as a somewhat more militant variety of the liberal vocation, which itself was believed to have an exclusive patent on political virtue. Those who served in the underground Soviet apparatus knew otherwise, of course, but that was one of the reasons they were obliged to remain underground—from which position they were able to manipulate fellow-traveling fools like Bruce Bliven with the skill of expert puppeteers, no matter how contradictory or embarrassing the twists and turns of the Moscow party line might be. In Bliven's mental universe, it was unimaginable to be opposed to Communism, for such opposition would have constituted a violation of the liberal compact.

And so Bliven persevered, blind as a bat to the moral implications of the policies he espoused, advising Comrade Stalin in the fourth of his recommendations that he "offer an amnesty to all opponents who have not yet been guilty of any crime under the normal civil code, on a pledge on their part of future good behavior." He then added a further suggestion: that Stalin withdraw, as he wrote, "from the public life of your country for a stipulated length of time, perhaps a year or eighteen months," to prove to the world that he was not, after all, like the other dictators on the world scene. The sheer idiocy of the entire document is still astounding to contemplate, yet this was the kind of thinking that held the liberal Left in thrall during one of the periods of *The New Republic*'s greatest influence.

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It is Ms. Wickenden's view that one of *The New Republic*'s "saving graces" in the Thirties was its "cultural criticism." "[Malcolm] Cowley's and [Edmund] Wilson's myopia about Soviet communism did not extend to the arts," she writes, "where they exuberantly explored modernism and its relation to the cultural legacy of the West." This is partly true, but it is by no means the whole story—especially where Cowley was concerned. The fact is, Cowley consistently used the literary pages of *The New Republic* to advance the reputations of writers favored by the Stalinist Left and discredit writers who opposed it. Which was why, in 1940, James T. Farrell published an article in *The American Mercury* attacking Cowley for turning *The New Republic* into what he characterized as a literary mouthpiece for the Communist Party, and why Edmund Wilson, in a private letter written around the same time, criticized Cowley's Stalinism along the same lines. Ms. Wickenden makes a brief and not altogether intelligible reference to Wilson's letter to Cowley in her introduction to the *Reader*, but never mentions Farrell's attack, which ought to have been taken account of.

In the realm of literature and the arts, however, Ms. Wickenden does not seem to have either a keen interest or a firm grasp. As a result, that whole side of *The New Republic*'s history, which in certain periods *was* one of the magazine's chief glories, is given little more than token acknowledgment in this new *Reader*. [2] From reading this new *New Republic Reader*, you could have no idea that the magazine employed two of the finest theater critics writing in this century—first Stark Young and then Eric Bentley—or that in Otis Ferguson it could boast of one of our best movie critics or that there had ever been a time when writers as distinguished as Léonie Adams, Conrad Aiken, Van Wyck Brooks, Kenneth Burke, Horace Gregory, Paul Rosenfeld, and Delmore Schwartz were regular contributors to its literary and arts pages. Rare contributions like T. S. Eliot's review of Julian Benda's *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, in 1928, and Scott Fitzgerald's obituary memoir of Ring Lardner, 1933, have likewise been dropped down the memory hole, as have George Santayana's essays from the earliest years of the magazine's existence. Clearly, contributions of this sort are of no interest to Ms. Wickenden. Instead she treats us to a report dispatched to *The New Republic* for the issue of February 14, 1933, by H. V. Kaltenborn, who offered the magazine's readers the following assessment of Adolf Hitler: "He is sworn to obey the Constitution and is likely to do so. The time for a Fascist coup d'état is past. Hitler himself had definitely lost prestige and power before he won the chancellorship. Whatever the result of the March fifth election, it will not give Adolf Hitler the opportunity to establish his long heralded *Drittes Reich*." As one turns the pages of this *Reader*, there are times when one almost suspects Ms. Wickenden of harboring a wicked sense of humor.

Or is it that, from the perspective of Washington, even the most mistaken political analysis inevitably commands an interest for the editors of *The New Republic* that a cogent criticism of culture and the arts cannot claim? In any comprehensive historical account of *The New Republic*, the implications of its move from New York to Washington in 1950 would have to be closely scrutinized. The magazine had been established in New York by a circle of intellectuals that had a serious interest in the arts. Its founding editor, Herbert Croly, was a writer on architecture. Even a writer as deeply immersed in political affairs as Walter Lippmann, another founder of the magazine, was

2 It isn't even true, by the way, as the dust jacket claims, that this *Reader* is "the first major anthology of essays" drawn from *The New Republic*. At least two earlier collections have been published—*The New Republic Anthology, 1915–1935*, edited by Groff Conklin, with an introduction by Bruce Bliven (Dodge, 1936); and *The Faces of Five Decades: Selections from Fifty Years of The New Republic, 1914–1964*, edited by Robert Luce, with commentary by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (Simon & Schuster, 1964). Both give better accounts of the periods they cover than the new *Reader*.

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capable in the early days of producing first-rate literary commentary, as he did in essays on Sinclair Lewis and H. L. Mencken. Edmund Wilson's tenure as literary editor was closely tethered to New York literary life in the Twenties and its involvement in European modernism—a tradition that was continued by Malcolm Cowley until the effort foundered on the shoals of Stalinist orthodoxy.

When Michael Straight moved *The New Republic* to Washington, in the aftermath of the Wallace debacle, the nation's capital was still a cultural backwater, and in many respects it has remained one. Only in a capital as intellectually provincial as Washington could a president like John Kennedy earn a reputation as a supporter of the arts simply by inviting André Malraux and Igor Stravinsky to dinner. (And it's been downhill since then, for such invitations nowadays go to the likes of Oprah Winfrey and Maya Angelou.) Two of Cowley's successors in the literary editorship—Robert Richman (no relation, incidentally, to *The New Criterion*'s poetry editor) and Robert Evett—did a creditable job of keeping up a high standard in the magazine's coverage of literature and the arts in the Fifties and early Sixties, but in the aftermath of the Kennedy assassination and the eruption of the counterculture and the codification of the "new sensibility" in the period of the Vietnam War, the magazine's cultural pages suffered a descent into radical chic almost as devastating to sound judgment and high standards as the Stalinism of the Thirties.

Given this history, it has been disappointing, to say the least, that *The New Republic* under Marty Peretz has never seen fit to appoint a literary editor whose primary intellectual interest is literature and the arts. This, I think, has something to do with the magazine's entrenched Washington orientation, which predisposes it to favor a philistine perspective, and a lot to do with its failed liberalism, which values the arts only when they can be seen to be an appendage to social policy. As a result, criticism of the arts has for some years now been relegated to a marginal status in the magazine. There are occasional articles of considerable interest, but little or nothing in the way of sustained attention. The principal exception to this rule has been the magazine's abiding attention to the movies—that sacred staple of yuppie culture, which years ago supplanted literature as the lead item in the magazine's back-of-the-book and, more often than not, has virtually nothing to do with serious artistic interests. Literature still fares better than most other fields in *The New Republic*, but that may be owing to the fact that the work of so many of the writers who are nowadays highly regarded is itself an expression of social policy, if not indeed of social pathology.

About the present literary editor of *The New Republic*, however, I cannot speak in an entirely disinterested spirit. For one of the longest essays that Ms. Wickenden has thought it appropriate to reprint in her survey of *The New Republic*'s first eighty years—and the only one that makes even a feeble attempt to comprehend the arts in the age of modernism—is Leon Wieseltier's "Matthew Arnold and the Cold War." This is the salvo that Wieseltier fired against *The New Criterion* upon the publication of its first issue in September 1982. Of course it is immensely flattering to find that the debut of our journal exactly a dozen years ago is deemed to be the only cultural event of the last eighty years important enough to merit a nine-page essay in this *New Republic Reader*. Yet the pleasure which this remarkable judgment affords us is somewhat allayed by the misrepresentations and unconscionable bad faith exhibited in the essay itself.

In this essay Wieseltier had some disparaging things to say about several of the writers who contributed to the first issue of *The New Criterion*, and falsely accused us of attempting to foster what he described as "the political delegitimation of doubt." If anything, of course, that first issue of *The New Criterion* may have been somewhat overloaded with expressions of doubt about a whole range of current cultural ortho-

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doxies. But these were not the kind of doubts that Wieseltier's liberal pieties could easily countenance, for they put into question the received opinions then dominating—and, for that matter, still dominating—the academic Left. To this first accusation Wieseltier added another that was equally false. This was the charge that we had somehow set out to undermine Lionel Trilling's call for "variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty" in critical debate. What was interesting about this charge, false as it was, were the unacknowledged restrictions that Wieseltier clearly wished to impose on what was now permissible to question in the name of "variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty."

Let me illustrate. Wieseltier took fierce exception to the essay called "Postmodern: Art and Culture in the 1980s," which I contributed to that first issue of *The New Criterion*. In that essay I was attempting to restate the theory of the modernist avant-garde, which I had first put forward in my book *The Age of the Avant-Garde* in 1973, and amplify it in the light of the so-called "postmodern" assault that had been mounted against modernism in the interim. It was my view that the historical relation which obtained between the avant-garde, on the one hand, and its bourgeois antagonists, on the other, had been unduly simplified by radicals and reactionaries alike. As I wrote in the introduction to *The Age of the Avant-Garde*: "The history of the avant-garde actually harbors a complex agenda of internal conflict and debate, not only about aesthetic matters but about the social values that govern them. If the bourgeois ethos may be said to have both a 'progressive' and a 'reactionary' side, the avant-garde is similarly divided." In the "Postmodern" essay of 1982, I restated the point this way: "The modern movement was always, perhaps, a more complex and pluralistic phenomenon than its more doctrinaire champions—and, for that matter, its more doctrinaire enemies—could ever bring themselves to recognize."

Yet this attempt to bring the principles of "variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty" to bear on the study of modernism was firmly rejected by Wieseltier, who, donning the dunce's cap of the classroom radical for the purpose of slaying a suspected neoconservative dragon, insisted that "Modernism *was* a cultural insurrection," pure and simple. "The most unsatisfactory aspect of Kramer's analysis," he wrote, "is his failure to face up to the contradiction between the marriage of modernism and capitalism, on the one hand, and the history of their relations, on the other. These relations have not been harmonious." As if anything I have ever written had claimed that they were!

This categorical refusal to entertain the "possibility" of "variousness" or "complexity" in the discussion of modernism made Wieseltier a pretty lame advocate of the principle of "difficulty" he wished to claim in Trilling's name, but it *was* a perfect example of what I have called "the Trilling dilemma": the affliction suffered by disabused liberals out of a fear of being stigmatized as conservatives. And in Wieseltier's case, moreover, it represented an unacknowledged intellectual reversal on his part, for when he reviewed *The Age of the Avant-Garde* in the pages of *Commentary* in June 1974 he had nothing but praise for what he described as "not only a thoughtful and provocative statement of a revisionist view of avant-garde art, but . . . a comprehensive theory of modern culture as well." But that was before he fell victim to "the Trilling dilemma" as a member of *The New Republic*'s highly conflicted editorial board. In 1982, *The New Criterion* and its editor clearly looked like the easy targets for a writer eager to renew his liberal credentials in the face of charges by the Left of a turn to the right at *The New Republic*, and it hardly seemed to matter that the claim to uphold "variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty" in critical debate got rather mangled in the process.

At *The New Republic*, the troubled afterlife of liberalism has often proven to entail more in the way of contradiction and denial than of anything resembling real complexity.

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Take, for example, the November 9, 1992, editorial endorsing "Clinton for President," which Ms. Wickenden has proudly reprinted in *The New Republic Reader*. Pronouncing the Bush administration "degenerate," a word seldom employed in liberal political discourse, the editors dismissed "the question of character"—"We believe it tells in Clinton's favor," they wrote—and cited the Democratic candidate's "Arkansas record" as a sign of the wonderful things he could be expected to accomplish in the fields of education and health. In fact, no more than the rest of the liberal media did *The New Republic* bother to scrutinize Clinton's Arkansas record before the election. Like a lot of other wounded liberals at the time, the editors of *The New Republic* turned Bill Clinton into a fantasy candidate, praising his "integrity," his "moral intuition," his grasp of "the cultural reality of today's America," his "internationalism" and "deep understanding" of foreign affairs, even his "marriage," as if on every one of these questions there were not already grave doubts to be entertained.

Which is why, since the election, as more and more has come to be known about the President's political and personal past and his conduct of the Presidency itself, *The New Republic* has been obliged, like the rest of the press that favored Clinton, to explore all of the questions that were studiously avoided during the 1992 campaign. Only now—in the issue of August 22/29—does the magazine speak of "the general foreign policy vacuum at the center of the Clinton administration," for example, and this is but one of the many other issues—the health-care proposal, the Whitewater affair, the Paula Jones lawsuit, sundry conflict-of-interest cases, etc.—on which the magazine's fantasy candidate has proved to be an immense political embarrassment. In the afterlife of liberalism at *The New Republic*, the magazine's so-called turn to the right always comes to a halt at the voting booth, at which point the critical faculty is furloughed to make way for the same old political sentimentalities.

The New Republic deserved a better book than Ms. Wickenden's patchwork anthology to mark its eightieth anniversary—the kind of book that at least made an attempt to define the magazine's mission in the aftermath of liberalism's failures now that those failures are once again so vividly on display in our political and cultural affairs. But the fact that the editors have settled for such an intellectually inept account of the magazine's own history is no doubt a reflection of the troubled and conflicted choices that continue to beset *The New Republic* itself.

Forthcoming in *The New Criterion:*

F. Scott Fitzgerald *by James W. Tuttleton*
Odilon Redon in Chicago *by Deborah Rosenthal*
The world of Elizabeth Bowen *by Richard Tillinghast*
T. S. Eliot & metaphysical poetry *by Paul Dean*
Jean Renoir, a life in film *by John Simon*
Sappho today *by D. S. Carne-Ross*
New poems *by Frederick Morgan & Enid Shomer*

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Charles Reich & America's cultural revolution

by Roger Kimball

It is characteristic of this kind of movement that its aims and premises are boundless. A social struggle is seen not as a struggle for specific, limited objectives, but as an event of unique importance, different in kind from all other struggles known to history, a cataclysm from which the world is to emerge totally transformed and redeemed.

—Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*

. . . the consciousness of the liberals had proved inadequate to the task.

—Charles Reich, *The Greening of America*

By the time you read this, the mud of Woodstock '94 will have been washed away, the sea of brand-name litter deposited by three hundred thousand weekend Corybants neatly disposed of, and the memories of Youth and Excess hardly more than a fading headache. And yet the *fact* of Woodstock '94 remains, and it provides much food for thought. Who would have believed that even now, in the mid-1990s, a small city of people could be induced to spend $135 for a ticket entitling the holder to insinuate himself for hours into a traffic jam and then to camp out in a muddy field while off in the distance aging pop stars competed loudly with this year's epigones for his attention?

Yes, it was easy to poke fun. One cartoon depicted a man on stage gazing out over an enormous crowd punctuated with tents advertising espresso and other yuppie comestibles: "People," he warned, "there is some bad Chardonnay going around." And although there were plenty of drug overdoses at Woodstock '94, there is something ridiculous about a commemoration of the counter-culture that boasted cash machines, promotional tie-ins with Pepsi Cola, and a security force of twelve hundred.

The usual gloss on the event was that it represented an unfortunate "commercialization" of the original Woodstock: a beautiful idea besmirched by contact with the greedy 1980s—that dark time presided over by Ronald Reagan and his minions. One thing that this canard fails to acknowledge is that the promoters—who were the same for both events—tried just as hard to clean up on Woodstock '69 as they did on the reprise. Only inexperience and bad planning prevented them from making the original celebration of peace and love a commercial triumph. Back in '69, they hadn't even thought of marketing Woodstock T-shirts. The reign of Häagen-Dazs ice cream and bottled water was in its infancy.

It was not only a matter of hypocrisy. There was also a large dollop of self-delusion: about the extent to which communal hedonism was the path to enlightenment, for example, as well as the extent to which narcissistic self-gratification was tantamount to existential daring. And yet the champions of the "myth" of Woodstock were right about one thing. The festival really did epitomize the longings, the moral temperature as it were, of a generation. There were

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the drugs and music and clothes, of course—the LSD, rock, and denim—but there were also the blasé, pre-AIDS promiscuity, the political posturing, the extraordinary combination of naïveté and self-righteousness. Above all, perhaps, there was the arrogant sense of entitlement that presupposed the very affluence and bourgeois economic largess that it pretended to reject. These were the defining elements of the original Woodstock. Its partisans were right in thinking that they added up to a cultural revolution, a "new sensibility" that would radically transform personal and institutional life.

It was this sensibility—the sensibility of the Sixties—that Woodstock '94 was meant to commemorate in its orgy of nostalgia and regression to adolescence. And its success, both in itself and as a media event—as catnip for the public imagination—suggests the extent to which that sensibility has triumphed in our culture. In this sense, Woodstock '94 was not so much an elegy for past glories as a reminder of how deeply the basic imperatives of that new sensibility have penetrated. If they no longer seem revolutionary, it is because they have been thoroughly assimilated and are now simply taken for granted: they are part of the air we breathe. But in the event those imperatives touched and profoundly altered everything from decorum and sexual morality to our understanding of liberal education, intellectual inquiry, the life of high art, and the prerogatives of popular culture. Taking the measure of America's cultural revolution is a complex task. It involves dealing with figures as diverse as Norman Mailer, Paul Goodman, Susan Sontag, Allen Ginsberg, Eldridge Cleaver, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Robert Lowell; it requires that one look back at the anti-war movement, the sexual revolution, the drug culture, the canonization of rock music, and the attack on "elitist" standards in art and intellectual life. No single figure or theme captures it all. But few figures better embody the ethos of Woodstock and the new sensibility than the sometime tenured Yale law professor turned guru of higher consciousness, Charles Reich. His book *The Greening of America*, published when he was forty-two, was both a paean to America's cultural revolution and a blueprint for bringing it about.

The Greening of America long ago took its place beside incense, love beads, and bell bottoms as part of the stale, slightly comic cultural paraphernalia of the Sixties. Leafing through its nearly four hundred pages today, it is difficult to appreciate the enormous sensation the book created when it first appeared in the fall of 1970. Did the country suddenly go mad? Quoth Mr. Reich: "In the world that now exists, a life of surfing *is* possible"; "even businessmen, once liberated, would like to roll in the grass"; "all choices are the 'right' choice"; "Rationality does not like to blow its mind"; "an examination or test is a form of violence"; and, speaking of the "ultimate sign of reverence, vulnerability, and innocence" of the liberated youth consciousness that he celebrates: "'Oh wow!'"

"'Oh wow!'" Do not think that Mr. Reich sounds silly because he is quoted "out of context." As Thomas Mallon observed in a look back at *The Greening of America* in *The American Spectator* a few years ago, Charles Reich is one author who actually *benefits* by being quoted out of context. And yet the late William Shawn, then the editor of *The New Yorker*, thought the book important enough to serialize in his magazine, thus reminding us that his publication of Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* in *The New Yorker* some years later was not simply a loopy aberration. *The New Yorker* was still a respectable magazine in 1970, and the appearance of *The Greening of America* in its pages in September gave the book tremendous advance publicity and cultural cachet. When it was published by Random House in October, it instantly became more than a best seller; it became a national preoccupation. *The New York Times* had just started its Op-Ed page in September 1970, under the editorship of Harrison Salisbury. That fall, Mr. Reich appeared not once but three times on the Op-Ed page with restatements of his argument. In short order, John Kenneth

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Galbraith, George F. Kennan, Herbert Marcuse, and Marya Mannes weighed in there with commentary on the book. This is in addition to the reviews and feature articles that the *Times* ran about the book. Everywhere one turned, *The Greening of America* was being discussed, praised, criticized, often in the most solemn terms.

It was an intoxicating draught for many commentators. Writing in *The New Republic*, Peter Caws suggested with a straight face that "the genuine strengths of the book are two: its history and its economics." Just so we have our bearings, here is an example of Mr. Reich's thinking about economics: "Since machines can produce enough food and shelter for all, why should not man end the antagonism derived from scarcity and base his society on love for his fellow man?"

Not that the responses to *The Greening of America* were uniformly admiring. Far from it. Many, maybe most, serious responses were critical. Roger Starr wrote a long and politely devastating anatomy of the book in *Commentary*. The poet L. E. Sissman wrote an even more polite criticism of the book in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Sissman remarked the curiosity that the first person singular pronoun never appeared in a book which asserted that "the individual self is the only true reality." Who or what is the "we" that Mr. Reich decorously employs throughout his book? It is, Sissman concludes, "the communal we of 'all the people of the dining hall' whose help Reich acknowledges in a postscript, of all the confused and alienated young admirers Reich has become in his thoughts." (Mr. Reich confides in that postscript that much of his book "was written in the Stiles-Morse dining halls at Yale.") Perhaps the pithiest critical summary of the book was provided by Stewart Alsop, in *Newsweek*, who called the book "a bag of scary mush."

Stewart Alsop was right. But it didn't matter. None of the criticism mattered. One needn't be a Hegelian or a follower of Oswald Spengler to recognize the existence, at times, of something like a *Zeitgeist*. Mr. Reich began work on what became *The Greening of America* in 1960 when he left his job at a high-powered Washington law firm to go to Yale. His career hitherto—beginning with his editorship of the *Yale Law Review* and clerkship for Justice Hugo Black—made him seem an unlikely candidate for the post of cheerleader for the cultural revolution. But by the time the book appeared a decade later, he had shed whatever lawyerly sobriety he once possessed and had become a veritable sounding board for the *Zeitgeist*, breathless-with-starry-eyes department. In an extraordinary passage at the beginning of *The Greening of America*, he furnishes us with prediction, manifesto, and credo all rolled into one:

> There is a revolution coming. It will not be like revolutions of the past. It will originate with the individual and with culture, and it will change the political structure only as its final act. It will not require violence to succeed, and it cannot be successfully resisted by violence. It is now spreading with amazing rapidity, and already our laws, institutions, and social structure are changing in consequence. It promises a higher reason, a more human community, and a new and liberated individual. Its ultimate creation will be a new and enduring wholeness and beauty—a renewed relationship of man to himself, to other men, to society, to nature, and to the land.
>
> This is the revolution of the new generation. Their protest and rebellion, their culture, clothes, music, drugs, ways of thought, and liberated life-style are not a passing fad or a form of dissent and refusal, nor are they in any sense irrational. The whole emerging pattern, from ideals to campus demonstrations to beads and bell bottoms to the Woodstock Festival, makes sense and is part of a consistent philosophy. It is both necessary and inevitable, and in time it will include not only youth, but all people in America.

It is difficult to say what is more remarkable about this testimonial: its fatuousness, or its accuracy. Whether or not the revolution Mr. Reich describes was "necessary and inevitable," it certainly did occur, and largely

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along the lines he delineates. His only mistake was in misconstruing the results: for whatever America's cultural revolution promised, it delivered not a "new and enduring wholeness and beauty" but a cultural and moral catastrophe whose consequences we are still reckoning.

As the manufacturers of successful patent medicines and miracle cures know, what matters is not the efficacy of the potion but the scope and vividness of the claims made on its behalf. The spiritual nostrum that Mr. Reich formulated consists essentially of two parts: 1.) an attack on contemporary life in America; and 2.) a utopian rhapsody about the emergence of a new, liberated consciousness. Neither part is distinguished by subtlety. "America," Mr. Reich tells us, "is one vast terrifying anti-community." The source of the problem is the American Corporate State (upper case, please!), that "vast apparatus, working unceasingly to create a false consciousness in people." Consequently, "work and living have become more pointless and empty. For most Americans, work is mindless, exhausting, boring, servile, and hateful." More succinctly, "the majority of adults in the country *hate their work*." In Mr. Reich's view, this is not really so surprising, since "beginning with school, if not before, an individual is systematically stripped of his imagination, his creativity, his heritage, his dreams, and his personal uniqueness, in order to style him into a productive unit for a mass, technological society. Instinct, feeling, and spontaneity are repressed by overwhelming forces." Which presumably means that the instinctive, spontaneous revulsion one feels for writing such as this is merely an illusion.

In a chapters called "The Failure of Reform" and "Anatomy of the Corporate State," Mr. Reich makes some stabs at explaining how we came to subsist in such dreadful spiritual torpor. He speaks of the failure of the New Deal, the insidious influence of advertising and the media, the rise of multinational corporations, and war, both the Cold and Vietnam varieties. There was nothing new in his diagnosis: scores of left-wing pundits had been decrying these and kindred evils at least since the end of World War II. But *The Greening of America* did stand out. This is partly because of the extremity of Mr. Reich's indictment: "America is one vast terrifying anti-community," etc. It is also because of his quasi-evolutionary model of "three general types of consciousness" that supposedly "predominate in America today." In fact, although his discussion is laughably crude, it was with his typology of "Consciousness I," "Consciousness II," and "Consciousness III" that Mr. Reich made his most indelible impression upon readers. Some went into ecstasies over it; many others ridiculed it, quickly twisting Mr. Reich's talk of "Con III people" into "Con-game," "Con-manship," and the like. Everybody remembered it.

According to Mr. Reich, Consciousness I originated in the nineteenth century. Its hallmarks are the rugged independence and pragmatism of laissez-faire capitalism. Its proponents believe "that success is determined by character, morality, and hard work, and self-denial." Once upon a time, such homely virtues had their uses. No more, though. Today, Mr. Reich explains, "Consciousness I types" include "farmers, owners of small businesses . . . AMA-type doctors . . . gangsters, Republicans, and 'just plain folks.'" But just as other Sixties radicals abominated the mainstream liberal establishment more than they hated any conservative orthodoxy, so Mr. Reich saves his bitterest words for the liberals who embody Consciousness II. He regards Consciousness I as a crude anachronism; as such it was no longer regarded as much of a threat.

Consciousness II, however, defines the prevailing reality—"the inhuman structure in which we now live," *viz* the ACS—the American Corporate State. Although Consciousness II began in the (for Mr. Reich) laudable reforms of the New Deal, its progressive force spent itself long ago. Now it is typified in the mindset of "aircraft employees, old leftists, young doctors, Kennedy men, suburban housewives." (Mr. Reich did have a

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talent for lists.) With its "ethic of control, of technology, of the rational intellect," Consciousness II was the real enemy of liberation. It was the rational intellect, especially, that bothered him, because "when experience is classified or analyzed it is also reduced." Never mind that some such "reduction" is required if experience is to be articulate, coherent, or publicly communicable: Mr. Reich wants his experience raw and unedited. Consciousness II, he explains, "has been persuaded that the richness, the satisfactions, the joy of life are to be found in power, success, status, acceptance, popularity, achievements, rewards, excellence, and the rational competent mind." Well, that's a start, you may say. But the problem is that Consciousness II "wants nothing to do with dread, awe, wonder, mystery, accidents, failure, helplessness, magic."

Which brings us to the higher Con, Consciousness III. Introducing Consciousness III, Mr. Reich sounds at first like an epidemiologist. It began with "a few individuals" in the mid-1960s; it "sprouted up, astonishingly and miraculously, out of the stony soil of the American Corporate State"; no one foresaw its appearance, but it soon "spread, here and abroad, by means invisible." Though it spread like the measles, Consciousness III is difficult to describe because, as Mr. Reich notes, the very attempt to say what it is draws on intellectual habits that Consciousness III rejects: "Authority, schedules, time, accepted customs, are all forms which must be questioned. Accepted patterns of thought must be broken; what is considered 'rational thought' must be opposed by 'nonrational thought'—drug-thought, mysticism, impulses."

Not entirely, though. Mr. Reich does allow that the "foundation" of Consciousness III is "liberation." He adds that "the meaning of liberation is that the individual is free to build his own philosophy and values, his own life-style, and his own culture from a new beginning." More generally, Consciousness III comes into being when an individual frees himself from the "false consciousness" that society imposes. People infused with the spirit of Consciousness III do "not believe in the antagonistic or competitive doctrine of life," they "do not compete 'in real life.' . . . People are brothers, the world is ample for all. . . . No one judges anyone else." Also, everyone rather likes himself: "Consciousness III says, 'I'm glad I'm me.'"

If you are looking for a concrete example of what Mr. Reich had in mind when he praises this higher consciousness, think back to the American campus in 1970. "One of the few places to observe man partially free of the competition and antagonism that are the norms of our social system is in a college dining hall where many of the students are Consciousness III people." Be that as it may, Mr. Reich was certainly correct to see the American university as one of the chief breeding grounds for the revolution he envisions. He speaks in this context of the "conversions" that are "constantly seen on campuses today": "In a brief span of months, a student, seemingly conventional in every way, changes his haircut, his clothes, his habits, his interests, his political attitudes, his way of relating to other people, in short, his whole way of life." Indeed.

One might have thought that the author of these millenarian sentiments must himself be a happy Consciousness III type, full of confidence, optimism, and sassy derring-do. Not a bit of it. In *The Sorcerer of Bolinas Reef*, an autobiography that he published in 1976, Mr. Reich reveals himself to have been a pathetic soul, paralyzed with nameless fears and unsatisfied longings. The ordinary tasks of daily life filled him with dread; normal human relations were completely beyond him. "The most constant presence in my life was fear and anxiety," he wrote,

> I would wake up in the morning and feel the need to clench my fists and clamp my teeth and squeeze my toes together, which sent tension all through my body as waves of fear and worry came over me. The particular things I worried about changed from day to day or hour to hour or week to week but that terrible feeling of dread remained with me almost all

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> the time. I hated that feeling. It made me afraid of living. It made me not want to wake up, not want to go out, not want to come home, not want to go to sleep.
>
> I worried about getting to work on time. I worried about my clothes and my appearance. A tiny slip in a brief I wrote might cause inconceivable disaster. I feared criticism or pressure from the senior partners. A business trip by plane filled me with worry about reservations and hotels and connections. And yet work was the last of my worries. It was in the rest of my life that I was most overwhelmed. I think I feared most the discovery and exposure of my secrets. All of my sexual feelings were repressed into an intense fantasy world that filled me with unsatisfied desire.

The Greening of America is in part a paean to sexual liberation and polymorphous sensuality. Isn't it beautiful? "What the new generation has already achieved is a way of being with other people that is closer, warmer, more open, more sensitive, more capable of sharing, than prior generations have known." In *The Sorcerer of Bolinas Reef*, Reich tells us that in December 1971 he left Yale for a six-month leave of absence and went to San Francisco. There he responded to an ad placed by a male model, and for $35 the prophet of Consciousness III and "closer, warmer, more open, more sensitive" relationships had his first sexual experience at the age of forty-three.

Mr. Reich's autobiographical revelations tell us something important about the psychological origins of his profound dissatisfaction with America and his fantasies of inhabiting a "higher," trouble-free consciousness. What they don't explain is why this personal diatribe against the world should have struck such a sympathetic chord. Perhaps many other people felt similar frustrations, though Mr. Reich surely presents an extreme case. From the perspective of the 1990s, what is most extraordinary about *The Greening of America* is the extent to which its complaints, its modes of thought, and its ideals summarized the radical agenda of America's cultural revolution. Mr. Reich's insistence that utopia was to be won through "a higher, transcendent reason," not politics per se, distinguishes his project from the violent activist crusades of the Weathermen, the Black Panthers, and other such groups. But apart from this, *The Greening of America* offered an impressive inventory of radical concerns and shibboleths, most of which are still very much in circulation. At the center of Mr. Reich's gospel is an indictment of rationality coupled with a profound craving for extra-rational modes of experience. His celebration of drugs—"one of the most important means for restoring dulled consciousness"—has to be understood in this context, as do his hosannas to polymorphous sexuality and rock music. According to Mr. Reich, rock music possesses "a complexity unknown to classical music"; it offers "the mystical transcendence of ordinary experience." In comparison to rock, "Beethoven seems like a series of parallel lines." Without drugs and rock music, Woodstock and the sensibility it celebrated would have been impossible. Allan Bloom was quite right when he observed, in *The Closing of the American Mind*, that "nothing is more singular about this generation than its addiction to music." "Rock music," Bloom wrote, "provides premature ecstasy and, in this respect, is like the drugs with which it is allied." What rock offers is a prefabricated Dionysian ecstasy, blatantly sexual, conspicuously non-rational.

The rejection of rationality has many advantages. For one thing, it relieves Mr. Reich of the burden of producing evidence for his pronunciamentos—e.g., the claim that "the majority of adults in the country *hate their work*." Reasons, evidence, arguments: what are they but stodgy appurtenances of the rational intellect? Transcending rationality also allows one to stop worrying about details like contradiction and consistency. Mr. Reich's classification of people as belonging to one of three types of consciousness is the crudest, most patronizing sort of stereotyping imaginable. And yet in the midst of excoriating "farmers, owners of small busi-

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nesses," *et al.*, he tells us that Consciousness III refuses "to evaluate people by general standards, it refuses to classify people, or analyze them." Of course, it is not that Mr. Reich wishes to stop classifying or evaluating people; by no means; he wishes only to classify and evaluate them according to the essentially subjective standard of "life-style." We see something similar in his rejection of "the whole concept of excellence and comparative merit." Mr. Reich goes pretty far, far enough to suggest that he might have a bright future in a politically correct college administration or, indeed, in a Washington administration. "Someone may be a brilliant thinker," he says, "but he is not 'better' at thinking than anyone else, he simply possesses his own excellence. A person who thinks very poorly is still excellent in his own way." And yet here, too, it is clear that Mr. Reich is "non-judgmental" in a very selective way. To take just one example: reflecting on traditional morality, Mr. Reich assures us that "to observe duties toward others, after the feelings are gone, is no virtue and may even be a crime." "Crime" is a troubling word, surely, especially when used by a lawyer who believes that "there is no situation in which one is entitled to act impersonally . . . with another human being."

Mr. Reich did make a few gestures toward common sense. But they were only gestures. For example, he told us that the "basic stance" of Consciousness III is "openness to any and all experience." Only later did it occur to him that this might have unpleasant implications. So he hastened to assure us that a "Consciousness III person" will not "engage in actions that violate his basic values; he will never kill or rape to try the experience." One is glad to know that, of course; but why not? If one's "basic stance" is openness to "any and all experience," who's to say that rape and murder are not among one's "basic values," especially as values are something Mr. Reich insisted each individual must "create" for himself?

With the passage of time, the mushiness of Mr. Reich's diagnosis has become clear. What makes the mush scary, as Stewart Alsop discerned, is Mr. Reich's moralistic pretension to special virtue and a knowledge that transcends "mere" facts. It is here that he is in perfect continuity with today's champions of political correctness. (One inevitably thinks of that other graduate of the Yale Law School who has been championing the "politics of meaning" lately.) Again and again we have seen how the demand for total freedom has paradoxically resulted in greater and greater restrictions on freedom. What began in license ends in ever increasing regulation. "Consciousness III people," Mr. Reich tells us, "see effortlessly what is phony or dishonest in politics, or what is ugly or meretricious in architecture and city planning, whereas an older person has to go through years of education [or perhaps we should say 're-education'] to make himself equally aware." Simply by virtue of having the right attitude, of adopting the correct "life-style," Mr. Reich's apostle of Consciousness III is vouchsafed a "new knowledge": "He does not 'know' the facts, but he still 'knows' the truth that seems hidden from others." The hubris of such claims is a familiar ingredient of millenarial enthusiasms. The historian Norman Cohn noted that "at the core" of certain medieval millenarial sects was the adept's belief that "he had attained a perfection so absolute that he was incapable of sin. . . . Every impulse was experienced as a divine command." Cohn also noted that, translated into political terms, the presumption of such "new knowledge" is a recipe for totalitarian arrogance. As Hannah Arendt observed in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, it is closely related to "totalitarian movements' spurious claims to have abolished the separation between public and private life and to have restored a mysterious wholeness in man." Charles Reich assured us that "the consciousness of the liberals had proved inadequate to the task" of restoring the lost wholeness he sought. Unfortunately, the cultural revolution that he greeted with such fanfare substituted the nihilistic moralism of self-indulgence for the considered strictures of bourgeois liberalism. We have yet to recover.

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Against modernity: the American Academy in the '20s

by Cynthia Ozick

A century, like any entrenched institution, runs on inertia and is inherently laggard. Even when commanded by the calendar, it will not easily give up the ghost. The turn of the century, as the wistful phrase has it, hardly signifies the brisk swing of a gate on its hinge: a century turns, rather, like a rivulet—a silky, lazy, unwitting flow around a silent bend. Whatever the twenty-first century (seemingly only minutes away) may bring, we, entering it, will go on being what we are: creatures born into, and molded and muddied by, the twentieth.

And the twentieth, too, did not properly begin with the demise of the nineteenth. When the fabled Armory Show introduced modern art to New York in 1913, the American cultural establishment (to use a term typically ours, not theirs) was in the governing hands of men born before the Civil War—men who were marked by what Santayana, as early as 1911, had already condemned as "the genteel tradition." Apart from the unjust condescensions of hindsight, and viewed in the not-so-easily-scorned light of its own standards, what *was* the genteel tradition? Its adherents, after all, did not know themselves to be pre-modernist; they did not know that a volcanic alteration of taste and expression was about to consume the century; they did not know that irony and pastiche and parody and a conscious fever of innovation-through-rupture would overcome notions of nobility, spirituality, continuity, harmony, uncomplicated patriotism, romanticized classicism. It did not occur to them that the old patterns were threadbare, or could be repudiated on grounds of exhaustion.

To be able to say what the men of the genteel tradition (its constituents were nearly all men) did know, and what they saw themselves as, and what they in fact were, would lead us directly to the sublimely conceived fellowship they established to embody their ideals—a kind of latter-day temple to the Muses. The word "temple" is apt: it calls up an alabaster palace on a hill; an elite priesthood; ceremonial devotions pursued in a serious though lyrical frame of mind—a resolute thoughtfulness saturated in notions of beauty and virtue, and turned from the trivial, the frivolous, the ephemeral. The name these aspirants gave to their visionary society—a working organization, finally, with a flesh-and-blood membership and headquarters in New York—was the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

And the homegrown Richelieu of this grand structure of mind and marble—a resplendent Venetian Renaissance edifice just off Riverside Drive on West 155th Street—was Robert Underwood Johnson, a powerful magazine editor and tireless poet who, though not precisely the organization's founder, was present at the Academy's earliest meetings, and as Permanent Secretary was its dominating spirit for the first three decades. In 1920 he disappeared, temporarily, having been appointed United States

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Ambassador to Italy. A 1922 newspaper photograph of Johnson—occasioned by a dispute with the Internal Revenue Service over unpaid taxes on ambassadorial meals and lodgings—shows a determined elderly gentleman with a steady yet relentless eye and a rather fierce pince-nez, the ribbon of which flows down over a full white beard and high collar. Unfortunately, no mouth is visible; it would be instructive to see the lips that so often speechified at Academy events, or adorned the hour with original verse. In still another portrait—a wood engraving by Timothy Cole, artist and Academy member—the Johnsonian mouth is again concealed under a cloud of furry whiskers, but the stiff cravat, scimitar nose, straight spine, and erect head are eloquent enough. They declare a fine facsimile of a Roman bust, attentive to what is noble and what is not—the face and figure of a man of established importance, a man who knows his worth: editor of *The Century*, Ambassador to Italy, Director of the Hall of Fame, Secretary of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Above all it is the face and figure of the nineteenth century, when the ideal of the publicly Noble could still stir the Western world. Together with the Harmonious, the Noble spoke in lofty statuary, in the balanced configurations of painting and music, in the white pilasters of heirloom architecture—but nowhere more melodiously than in the poetry that descended (though somewhat frayed by over-handling) from Keats:

The Temple

If this be but a house, whose stone we place,
  Better the prayer unbreathed, the music
    mute
  Ere it be stifled in the rifted lute;
Better had been withheld those hands of grace,
Undreamed the dream that was this moment's
    base
  Through nights that did the empty days
    refute.
  Accurs'd the fig-tree if it bear no fruit;
Only the flower sanctifies the vase.

*

No, 'tis a temple—where the mind may kneel
  And worship Beauty changeless and divine;
    Where the sage Past may consecrate the
      stole
Of Truth's new priest, the Future; where the
      peal
    Of organ voices down the human line
Shall sound the diapason of the soul.

It was with these verses that Robert Underwood Johnson celebrated the laying of the cornerstone of the Academy's new building in 1921. Yet the Romantic exhalations of the last century—a century more than twenty years gone—could not be kept going by pumping up a useless bellows that had run out of breath. The cornerstone may have received the pious mimicry of "The Temple" as its chief treasure, but modernism (one of its names was Ezra Pound) was pounding at the Temple's gates, shattering the sage Past and slighting the old forms of Beauty.

The Temple was not unaware of these shocking new vibrations: it derided and dismissed them. In 1925, three years after the publication of *The Waste Land*, Robert Underwood Johnson pointed to T. S. Eliot as one of the "prominent apostles" of "this so-called modern American poetry," and scolded him for prosiness and lack of taste and humor, while praising "the dignity and beauty of Landor's invocation to an English brook." (Walter Savage Landor, it might be noted, was born in 1775 and died in 1864, when Johnson was eleven years old.) Quoting lines from Marianne Moore, Johnson asked, "What is the remedy for this disease?" "The Academy's chief influence," he concluded, "will come from what and whom it recognizes, what and whom it praises, and what and whom it puts forth."

In the extraordinary literary decade that followed the Great War, the Academy neither recognized nor praised nor put forth nor took in T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, Wallace Stevens, Conrad Aiken, H.D., Louise Bogan, John Crowe Ransom,

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or E. E. Cummings—revolutionaries, in their varying degrees, of voice, theme, and line. Not since Whitman had there been such a conflagration of fresh sound in American verse; it engulfed the poets of the Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes and Jean Toomer among them, and burned brilliantly, though in another language, among the American Yiddish imagists of the *In Zikh* movement farther downtown. Beauty, it seemed, was turning out to be neither changeless nor divine: it could take the form of the Brooklyn Bridge, and manifest itself in idioms and accents that an unreceptive Temple, immaculately devoted to the difference between "can" and "may" (the Academy's task, Johnson said, was to preserve this distinction), might be oblivious to at best, or at worst recoil from. The world beyond the bronze doors was flooded with an innovative ferment so astounding (and exhilarating) that no other segment of the twentieth century can match it. Consider: 1918 saw the publication of Willa Cather's *My Antonia*, Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, the first installments of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, volumes by Rebecca West and H. L. Mencken; *The Education of Henry Adams* won the Pulitzer Prize; the Theater Guild was founded in New York; in Germany, the Dada movement began; in Russia, Aleksandr Blok was writing poetry in praise of the Bolshevik Revolution (without suspecting that its dissolution eight decades later would draw equal praise).

The following year brought *Winesburg, Ohio*, by Sherwood Anderson; *Jurgen*, by James Branch Cabell; *The Arrow of Gold*, by Joseph Conrad; *La Symphonie pastorale*, by André Gide; *Demian*, by Hermann Hesse; *The Moon and Sixpence*, by Somerset Maugham—and Carl Sandburg won the Pulitzer. Finally, the next eight years—1920 to 1927—introduced a torrent of works by F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Galsworthy, Katherine Mansfield, Max Beerbohm, H. G. Wells, Sigrid Undset, John Dos Passos, Aldous Huxley, D. H. Lawrence, George Bernard Shaw, Luigi Pirandello, Bertolt Brecht, T. S. Eliot, Sinclair Lewis, François Mauriac, Virginia Woolf, Stefan Zweig, Rainer Maria Rilke, Italo Svevo, Robert Frost, Colette, S. Ansky, E. M. Forster, Edna Ferber, Thomas Mann, Maxwell Anderson, Michael Arlen, Theodore Dreiser, Maxim Gorky, Franz Kafka, Gertrude Stein, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Ernest Hemingway, W. E. B. Du Bois, T. E. Lawrence, Sean O'Casey, William Faulkner, Jean Cocteau, William Butler Yeats, Thornton Wilder, Henri Bergson. Mixed though these writers are in theme, genre, nationality, and degree of achievement, they represent, on the literary side, what we mean when we speak of the Twenties—an era staggering in its deliverance from outworn voices and overly familiar modes and moods. Not all were "experimental"; indeed, most were not; but all claimed an idiosyncratic distinction between their own expectations of language and art and the expectations of the author of "The Temple."

To combat the new streams of expression, Harrison Smith Morris, a literary man now long forgotten, proposed a Resolution:

> The National Institute of Arts and Letters [the Academy's lower house], in its long established office of upholder of Taste and Beauty in Arts and Letters in America, welcomes the approach of a return to the standards made sacred by tradition and by the genius of the great periods of the past.
>
> The National Institute feels that the time has arrived to distinguish the good from the bad in the Arts, and to urge those who have loved the literature and painting that are accepted by the winnowing hand of time to turn away from the Falsehoods of this period and again to embrace only the genuine expressions of man's genius.
>
> And the National Institute calls upon all those who write or speak on this essential subject of our culture as a nation, to ask their hearers to join in abhorrence of the offences, and to insist on the integrity of our arts.

Though the archives of the Academy do not yield information on how the members voted, the Resolution itself was in profound

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consonance with the views held by the Permanent Secretary, Robert Underwood Johnson himself. And Johnson in effect ran things, despite the status of the men at the top: William Dean Howells had, after all, been the Academy's first president. He was succeeded by a pair of Columbia University eminences: William Milligan Sloane, author of a mammoth four-volume life of Napoleon Bonaparte, and Nicholas Murray Butler, Columbia's own president. Nevertheless Johnson was the Academy's primary engine. A first-rate organizer and administrator, he single-handedly acquired an endowment for the Academy—or, rather, he acquired the friendship and loyalty of Archer Milton Huntington, an extraordinarily wealthy donor with a generous temperament and a serious interest in Spanish culture, who showered the Academy with periodic gifts, including the West 155th Street palace and its land, so that within a very short span a membership that was only recently being dunned for dues found itself cushioned and cosseted by prosperity.

At the annual meeting of 1925, Johnson spoke of Huntington as "a permanent friend of the Academy who desires to remain permanently anonymous." This was certainly true; yet Huntington—who quickly became a member of the Academy, and whose second wife, a sculptor, was herself eventually elected—was not without intimations of immortality. In an autographed poem dedicated to the Academy and entitled "Genius," and in a style reminiscent of Johnson's own, he wrote in praise of "this oriflamme of glory":

> High mystery prophetic that men cry!
> The splendid diadem of hearts supreme,
> Who shape reality from hope's vast dream
> And gild with flame new pantheons in the sky!
> Thus are we led to nobly raise on high
> An edifice of deeds that may redeem
> The lowliness of being, 'neath the gleam
> Of mists all colorless where life must lie.

(There was a follow-up stanza as well.)

Huntington was Johnson's organizational masterstroke—a funding triumph with recognizably lofty verbal credentials, capable of gilding new pantheons with cash. But Johnson's executive instincts pulled off a second administrative coup—in the shape of Mrs. Grace Vanamee, who was enlisted as the Permanent Secretary's permanent deputy in the fall of 1915. A widow in her forties, Mrs. Vanamee was a kind of robust Johnsonian reverberation: if he was exuberantly efficient, so was she; if he was determined that no concern, however minuscule, should go unresolved, so was she. Mrs. Vanamee was, in brief, an unflagging enthusiast. She is reputed to have been a woman of large dimensions (though there is no one alive who can claim to have set eyes on her), and even larger energies. Like Johnson, she could successfully concentrate on several activities at once. Her career as celebrated Academy factotum (a combination of executive director and chief housekeeper) was developed in the company of a certain Frank P. Crasto, her indispensable assistant and sidekick. Mrs. Vanamee identified him as "a Captain in the Reserves [who] knows what it is to inspect buildings and equipment and to maintain discipline as well as order and cleanliness," and added, with the esteem due such things, that "he understands all about printing, and is an expert proofreader." He was also found to be useful in handling the heavy work. Captain Crasto became Major Crasto, and Major Crasto was promoted to Colonel Crasto—ascending titles that Mrs. Vanamee noted with veneration. His maintenance responsibilities were perhaps less lofty than his officer status would suggest—at the Academy Board meeting of May 11, 1921, for instance, he reported that 138 of 310 bulbs were out. Eventually he was raised to the post of Librarian; but his ascent in Mrs. Vanamee's affections had evidently occurred long before. In times of sickness they spelled each other. In 1923, when she was seriously ill in a Brooklyn hospital (but she lived until 1946), all inquiries concerning her condition were directed to the Colonel, and it was she who in 1925 packed him off on a recuperative

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steamer trip to New Orleans after a heart episode: "there is nothing pressing at the Academy," she urged. One gets the inescapable impression of a pair of turtle doves under the Temple's eaves.

Mrs. Vanamee, the Colonel, and, of course, the Permanent Secretary all moved on together to the new building on West 155th Street. Meanwhile the Academy's old premises, a sort of office building with auditorium on West 81st Street, were sought by Wytter Bynner of the Poetry Society of America, who hoped to rent it as a meeting place. The idea was discussed by the Academy Board early in 1922 and quickly rejected. Brander Matthews, another Columbia University luminary, dismissed such a convention of poets as "a large body of very small people," and Robert Underwood Johnson declined to place "the Academy's stamp of approval on the lack of standards of the Poetry Society." (Its membership at the time included Stephen Vincent Benét, Carl Sandburg, and Edwin Arlington Robinson, all of whom Johnson scorned.)

It was in this same year that Sinclair Lewis, elected to membership, angrily rejected it. Seven years later, accepting the Nobel Prize in Literature before the Swedish Academy in Stockholm, he excoriated its American counterpart: "It does not represent literary America of today. It represents only Henry Wadsworth Longfellow." The Academy was offended but unruffled. The Board went on to review a roster of quotations that might be appropriate to stand as a frieze across the brow of its new building. Aperçus by Cicero, Lucian, Pericles, Plato, Aristotle, and Emerson were proposed, none of which satisfied—whereupon Johnson remarked that a member might be moved (he may have been thinking of himself) to write something original. The final wording for the frieze was not determined until 1924, a year after the opening of the building. Brander Matthews made the selection: HOLD HIGH THE FLAMING TORCH FROM AGE TO AGE. When the architects asked for a second quotation, Matthews supplied them with ALL ARTS ARE ONE ALL BRANCHES ON ONE TREE. (The sources for both lines are unknown.)

The estimated cost of the finished Temple as presented to the Academy by the architects—McKim, Mead, and White, all three of whom were members—was $380,223.04, though the final bill probably exceeded half a million. The doors were heavy bronze. An early sketch of the façade before completion shows a pair of neoclassical sculptures in embrasures, and while these draped female figures, goddesses or Muses, at length vanished from the plans and were never executed, their spirit stuck fast. Stanford White and Charles McKim were visionaries of an ideal acropolis conceived as an echo (or rebirth) of older cities grown legendary through literature and art.

It was the same echo that had sounded in Robert Underwood Johnson's ear since his days at Earlham College, a small Quaker institution in Indiana that emphasized Latin and "the human element of Virgil, Horace, Tacitus, Cicero." Even the college-boy jokes were in Latin: a classroom was dubbed *Nugipolyloquidium*, "a place of talkers of nonsense." Out of all this came the lingering faith that the classical is the eternal, and that the past, because it *is* the past, holds a sacred and permanent power—a view that differs from the historical sense, with its awareness (in contradistinction to Truth and Beauty) of evolution, displacement, violence and oppression, migration of populations, competing intellectual movements, the decline and fall of even contemporary societies and cultures. The achievement of such a serene outlook will depend on one's distance from strikes, riots, destitution, foreign eruptions, the effects of prejudice, immigrants pressing in at Ellis Island, and all the rest. Inland Earlham in 1867, when Johnson was a freshman there, is deservedly called "tranquil"—"Tranquil Days at Earlham" is a chapter in Johnson's autobiographical *Remembered Yesterdays*, self-published in 1923; and tranquility was the goal and soul of Johnson's artistic understanding. "We were charmed by the mountain scenery of the Gulf of

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Corinth, every peak and vale of which is haunted by mythological associations," he writes in a chapter entitled "Delight and Humor of Foreign Travel." "The Bay of Salamis gave us a thrill and at Eleusis we seemed to come in close touch with classic days, for here was the scene of the still unexplained Eleusinian mysteries." Living Greeks—at their rustic best, since "the urban Greek is undersized and unimpressive"—are admired solely as an ornamental allusion: "Some of them resembled fine Italian types, one or two reminding me of the elder Salvini," an Italian tragedian. More gratifying than these Greeks in the flesh are the crucial landmarks: "I stayed up until one o'clock at night to catch sight of the beacon on the 'Leucadian steep' which marks the spot from which Sappho is reputed to have thrown herself." "One may well imagine that three fourths of the time we spent in Athens was passed on the Acropolis."

This was the sensibility that dreamed and labored over and built the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Johnson came to this task—this passion—after forty years at the influential *Century* magazine (where he had refused to publish Edith Wharton because she had written stories about divorce). He was then sixty years old, in full and effective vigor, with a strong activist bent and an affinity for citizenly service. He was an advocate, a man of causes. At *The Century* he had promoted the conservation of forests and was instrumental in getting congressional sanction for the creation of Yosemite National Park. It was he who persuaded a coolly reticent General Ulysses S. Grant to set down an emotional memoir of the battle of Shiloh. As secretary of a committee of authors and publishers, Johnson lobbied for international copyright and fought against the pirating of foreign books. His ardor spilled over into nine volumes of verse, all self-published, on subjects both sublime and civic, often interwoven: "The Vision of Gettysburg," "The New Slavery (On the Expatriation by Germany of Civil Populations of Belgium)," "Armenia," etc. There are poems on the Dreyfus Affair: "The Keeper of the Sword (Apropos of the Dreyfus Trial at Rennes)" and "To Dreyfus Vindicated." The talent may have been middling, but the goodwill, and the prophetic vigilance, were mammoth.

If, as Emerson insists, the shipbuilder is the ship, then Robert Underwood Johnson was, long before its founding, the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Whatever ignited his enthusiasm, whatever struck him as repugnant—these formed the mind of the Academy. It was not that Johnson was dictatorial—on the contrary, he was elaborately courtly, and punctilious as to protocol. (As Permanent Secretary, he sent himself a deferential letter announcing his election to the Academy, and, with equal deference, wrote back to accept the honor.) He did no violence to the opinion of others; rather, his opinion was generally the opinion of the membership, and vice versa. It may have been the Muses themselves who nurtured such unanimity; or else it was the similarity of background of these cultivated gentlemen, similarly educated, similarly situated in society, each with his triplet of rhythmically interchangeable names, all of them patriots. In 1919—directly in the wake of the upheavals of the First World War—race riots broke out in Chicago and a dock workers' strike hit New York; the eight-hour workday was instituted nationally; President Woodrow Wilson won the Nobel Peace Prize and presided over the first meeting of the League of Nations in Paris; the Red Army took Omsk, Kharkov, and the Crimea; Mussolini founded the Italian fascist movement; Paderewski became Premier of Poland. Henri Bergson, Karl Barth, Ernst Cassirer, Havelock Ellis, Karl Jaspers, John Maynard Keynes, Rudolf Steiner—indelible figures—were all active in their various spheres. Short-wave radio made its earliest appearance, there was progress in sound for movies, and Einstein's theory of relativity was borne out by astrophysical experiments. Walter Gropius developed the Bauhaus in Germany and revolutionized painting, architecture, sculpture, and the industrial arts.

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Kandinsky, Klee, and Modigliani were at work, and Picasso designed the set of Diaghilev's *The Three Cornered Hat*. Jazz headed for Europe; the Los Angeles Symphony gave its initial concert; the Juilliard School of Music opened in New York, and the New Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Edgard Varèse, inaugurated a hearing for modern music. A nonstop flight across the Atlantic was finally accomplished. Babe Ruth hit a 587-foot home run. The Nobel Prize in Literature went to Knut Hamsun.

In short, 1919 was the beginning of a deluge of new forms, new sounds, new ventures, new arrangements in the world. And in such an hour the Academy undertook to mark the centennial of James Russell Lowell, who had died twenty-eight years before. In itself, the choice was pleasant and not inappropriate. A leading American eminence of the nineteenth century, a man of affairs as well as a man of letters, a steady opponent of slavery, Lowell was poet, critic, literary historian. He was vigorous in promoting the study of modern languages, which he taught at Harvard. He was, besides, *The Atlantic Monthly*'s first editor and (with Charles Eliot Norton) a founder of *The North American Review*. He served as American ambassador to the Court of Spain, and afterward as emissary to Britain. His complete works—both verse and prose—occupy ten volumes. According to Lowell's biographer, Horace E. Scudder, Lowell "impressed himself deeply on his generation in America, especially upon the thoughtful and scholarly class who looked upon him as their representative." Johnson unquestionably looked on Lowell as his representative; Lowell's career—poet, editor, ambassador—was an ideal template for Johnson's own.

The centennial program, subtitled "In Celebration of the Unity and Power of the Literature of the English-speaking People," was intended to emphasize the ongoing link with the Mother Country. To further this connection, invitations went out to, among others, Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, Robert Bridges (the Poet Laureate), Rudyard Kipling, James Barrie, Conan Doyle, G. K. Chesterton, Gilbert Murray, Arthur Quiller-Couch, Edmund Gosse, Alfred Noyes, and John Galsworthy. Ambitious though this roster was, only the last two accepted and actually arrived—Galsworthy with the proviso that he would attend the gala luncheon "*so long as this does not entail a speech*." Stephen Leacock came with a troop of notables from Canada, and Australia was represented by one lone guest.

Still, a demonstration of the unity and power of literary Anglo-Saxonism was not, as it turned out, the whole purpose of the centennial. Nor was it precisely as an act of historic commemoration that Johnson sought to honor Lowell. On February 13, 1919, a New York newspaper, *The Evening Post*, explained: "James Russell Lowell, who was born a hundred years ago next week . . . would not have liked vers libre or modern verse in general, says Robert Underwood Johnson. . . . Mr. Johnson knew Lowell personally." The *Post* went on to quote the Permanent Secretary's reminiscences—"I remember hearing Lowell once say, when asked if he had read the latest novel, 'No, I have not yet finished Shakespeare'"—and followed with a considerable excerpt from the rest of Johnson's remarks:

> Mr. Lowell represented in himself, as it is sometimes necessary to remind the current generation, the highest plane of learning, scholarship, and literary art, the principle of which he expounded in season and out of season in his critical writings. . . . His critical works furnish a body of doctrine in literary matters which is certainly pre-eminent in American criticism at least. In these days, when the lawlessness of the literary Bolsheviki has invaded every form of composition, it is of tonic advantage to review Lowell's exposition of the principles of art underlying poetry and criticism. . . . No man studied to better purpose the range of expression afforded by the English classics or would have been more outraged by the random and fantastic productions which are classified with the poetry of the present time under the name of vers libre. While no doubt he recognized the force of

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> Whitman, he refused to recognize him as a poet, and once retorted, when it was suggested that much of Whitman's poetry was between prose and poetry, that there was nothing between prose and poetry.

Johnson concluded with a pledge that the Academy would take on the "agreeable duty to endeavor to accentuate the treasures of American literature which have fallen into neglect," and hoped that the occasion would "incite our college faculties and their students to a study of the heritage which we have in the beautiful poetry and the acute and high-minded criticism of James Russell Lowell."

To suppose that the times were ripe for a return to the prosody of Lowell was a little like a call to reinstate Ptolemy in the age of Einstein. The Lowell centennial was not so much a memorial retrospective—i.e., an unimpeachable review of a significant literary history—as it was that other thing: an instance of antiquarianism. Or—to do justice to Johnson's credo—it was a battle-cry against the onrushing alien modernist hordes, the literary Bolsheviki.

The difficulty was that the Bolsheviki were rampant in all the arts. Young American composers—Virgil Thomson, Marc Blitzstein, Elliott Carter, Marion Bauer, Roger Sessions, Herbert Elwell, Aaron Copland, George Gershwin—were streaming toward Nadia Boulanger's studio outside Paris for instruction in harmony (much as young American writers were streaming toward Gertrude Stein's Paris sitting room for lessons in logic), and coming back home with extraordinary new sounds. Boulanger introduced Copland to the conductor Walter Damrosch (later President of the Academy at a time when its laces were far less strait), who joked about Copland's Symphony for Organ and Orchestra: "If a gifted young man can write a symphony like that at twenty-three, within five years he will be ready to commit murder." What Copland called the "jazz spirit," with its irregular rhythms and sometimes exotic instruments, was received by the more conventional critics as a kind of symphonic deicide—the old gods of rational cadence struck down by xylophones, tam-tams, Chinese woodblocks. Copland was charged with releasing a "modernist fury" of "barnyard and stable noises." "New York withholds its admiration," Virgil Thomson wrote of the critical atmosphere, "till assured that you are modeling yourself on central Europe."

In the prosperity and optimism of the Twenties, proponents of the "new" music were turning their backs (and not without contempt) on traditionalists like Frederick Shepherd Converse, Edward Burlingame Hill, George Whitefield Chadwick, Reginald De Koven, Arthur Foote, Victor Herbert, and John Powell, all members of the Academy, and all continuing to compose in nineteenth-century styles. The maverick among them was John Alden Carpenter, nearly the only Academician to venture into blues, ragtime, and jazz. But in the world beyond the Academy, Louis Armstrong and other eminent black musicians were revolutionizing the American—and European—ear, and by 1927 Duke Ellington's band in Harlem's Cotton Club was devising original voices for trumpet and trombone. The Twenties saw an interpenetration of foreign originality as well: Sergei Rachmaninoff arrived after the Russian Revolution, and in the winter of 1925 Igor Stravinsky appeared with both the New York Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony. Three years earlier, Darius Milhaud was lecturing at Harvard, Princeton, and Columbia. Ernest Bloch, noted for chamber music and an enchantment with Hebrew melodies, became an American citizen in 1924. Arnold Schoenberg, inventor of twelve-tone technique and a refugee from Nazi Germany, emigrated to the United States in 1933, but his influence had long preceded him.

Meanwhile, Henry Cowell, a native Californian, was not only trying out novel sounds on the piano—sometimes treating it like a violin—but was inventing a new instrument, the rhythmicon, "capable of producing very complex combinations of beat

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patterns." The quarterly Cowell founded, suitably named *New Music*, was hospitable to the work of the most arcane innovators, including Charles Ives—whose composition teacher at Yale in 1894 had been the Academy's mild but uncomprehending Horatio Parker. It is one of the ironies of the Academy's later history, and also one of its numerous triumphs over its older self, that grants and fellowships are now awarded to young composers in Charles Ives's name, and out of the royalties of his estate—though Ives's polytonality, quarter tones, and disjointed melody lines would surely have appalled the Academicians of the Twenties. In February of 1923, Richard Aldrich, a member of the Institute since 1908, and music critic for *The New York Times*, wrote in a bitter column called "Some Judgments on New Music":

> It is nothing less than a crime for a composer to write in any of the idioms that have been handed down, or to hold any of the older ideas of beauty. . . . Any who do not throw overboard all the baggage inherited from the past, all transmitted ideas of melody and harmony, are reactionaries, pulling back and hindering the march of music. . . . Whatever is presented to [the receptive new audiences] as acrid ugliness or rambling incoherence is eagerly accepted as emanations of greatness and originality. It never occurs to them that it might be simple, commonplace ugliness.

These are lines that might have emerged from Robert Underwood Johnson's own inkpot. But it fell to John Powell, a Virginian elected to the Institute in 1924, to catch the Johnsonian idiom entire—the modernists, Powell said, were "nothing more or less than cheap replicas of the recent European Bolshevists." Powell was a composer of moods, beguiled by the picturesque and the nostalgic, especially as associated with Southern antebellum plantation life. The introductory wail of his *Rapsodie Nègre* is intended to capture a watermelon peddler's cry—a telltale image that, apart from its melodic use, may possibly bear some relation to his distaste for racial mixing and new immigrants. His musical preference was for what he termed "the Anglo-Saxon Folk Music School," and he shunned *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Tristan und Isolde* not because he disliked opera, but because he disapproved of marital infidelity.

The new music, with its "acrid ugliness and rambling incoherence," may have been the extreme manifestation of what the Academy idealists were up against. Among the other arts, though, the idealists did have one strong ally, which steadfastly resisted—longer than music and longer than painting—the notions of freedom of form and idiosyncratic or experimental vision that modernism was opening up to the individual artist. Sculpture alone continued to profess public nobility and collective virtue in service to a national purpose. "Sculpture" meant statuary dedicated to historical uplift and moral seriousness. Even architecture, through its functional aspect, was more inclined to engage in individual expression—but virtually every statue was intended as a monument. The Armory Show of 1913, the catalyst that revolutionized American painting, barely touched the National Sculpture Society, which had settled on Augustus Saint-Gaudens and his successors, in their advance from marble to bronze, as "The Golden Age of American Sculpture." (Saint-Gaudens died in 1907.) Colossal multifigured structures, exhibition palaces (often fashioned from temporary materials and afterward dismantled), fountains, celebratory arches, symbolic themes indistinguishable from spiritual credos—all these were in full consonance with Robert Underwood Johnson's dream of an American Temple. Nearly fifty years before the Armory Show, the sculptor Erastus Dow Palmer had declared: "No work in sculpture, however wrought out physically, results in excellence, unless it rests upon, and is sustained by, the dignity of a moral or intellectual intention."

This dogma remained intact until the rise of the modernists, who repudiated not only its principles but its techniques. The Paris

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Beaux-Arts tradition depended on studio assistants; a sculptor was a "thinker," a philosopher who conceived the work and modeled it in clay, after which lower-level technicians were delegated to carry out its translation into finished form. Modernism, by contrast, brought on a rush of hand carving—the kinetic and aesthetic interaction of sculptor with tools and material. But it was not until the Twenties were almost out that individual style began to emerge as a recognizable, though clearly not yet dominant, movement. It was a movement that purposefully turned away from Old World models, and looked to the "primitive," to African and pre-Columbian as well as Sumerian and Egyptian sources. While the Academy itself clung to the civically earnest, advanced taste was (once again) headed for unfamiliar territory. Thomas Hastings, a Beaux-Arts adherent elected to the Academy in 1908, had designed a Victory Arch—adorned with abundant inspirational statuary—for the soldiers returning after the First World War to march through. In 1919 it was executed in temporary materials, and the soldiers did march through it. But public sentiment failed to support a permanent rendering in stone, and the Arch was taken down. Monuments to a civic consensus were slipping from popularity; work steeped in lofty aims met indifferent, or perhaps jaded, eyes.

Yet the new sculptors were not recognized by the Academy, and the strikingly fresh shapes and experiments of the Twenties streamed past the Temple only to attract its vilifying scorn. Saul Baizerman, whose innovative studies of contemporary life, *The City and the People*, were hammered out between 1920 and 1925, was never invited into the Institute, while even more notable sculptors of the period had to wait for a later generation's approbation. Bruce Moore was not admitted until 1949; William Zorach became a member only in 1953; and Robert Laurent only in 1970, the year of his death. Within the Academy of the third decade, it was Daniel Chester French (admitted in 1908) who was pre-eminent: the prized sculptor of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., the creator of a female *Republic* (with staff, globe, and dove) and of Columbia University's *Alma Mater*, himself a grand symbol of the grand symbolic statuary that preceded the modernist flood and that was finally—if belatedly in the Academy—overwhelmed by it.

In a tribute delivered on French's death in 1931, Royal Cortissoz, an Academician who was art critic for *The New York Herald Tribune* from 1891 on, observed with just precision that French "was thoroughly in harmony with [the Academy's] spirit" in a life "dedicated from beginning to end to the production of noble work. . . . A beautiful seriousness of purpose animated him." As an example he offered French's figure of *Memory*, "a seated nude reminiscent of antique ideas." Cortissoz was reflecting exactly what William Milligan Sloane had prescribed in his address at the opening of the Temple in 1923:

> We are a company seeking the ideal . . . we do not forget that our business is conservation first and foremost, conservation of the best and but incidentally, if at all, promotion of the untried. We are to guard tradition, not to seek out and reward innovation . . . we are sternly bound as an organization to examine carefully any intellectual movement striving to break with tradition. . . . Our effort in word and work must be to discover and cherish the true American spirit and keep it pure, in order to prevent inferior literature and art from getting the upper hand.

What, then, was Cortissoz about when he labeled modern art "a gospel of stupid license and self-assertion," if not preventing the inferior from getting the upper hand? Still another Academician, the painter and critic Kenyon Cox, wrote: "There is only one word for this denial of all law, this insurrection of individual license without discipline and without restraint; and that word is anarchy." The Armory Show, Cox announced, was a "pathological museum" where "individualism has reached the pitch of sheer insanity or triumphant charlatan-

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ism." Gauguin was "a decorator tainted with insanity." Rodin displayed "symptoms of mental decay." If Cortissoz thought Matisse produced "gauche puerilities," Cox went further, and condemned "grotesque and indecent postures" drawn "in the manner of a savage or depraved child."

Eleven years after the Armory shock, the Academy, still unforgiving in 1924, published three papers attacking "Modernist Art," one each by Cortissoz and Cox, and the third by Edwin Howland Blashfield. All three blasts had appeared in periodicals in 1913 and 1914, in direct response to the Armory Show, but the Academy—while asserting that modernism's influence was "on the wane"—saw fit to reprint them in the interests of dislodging "eccentricities" from "the tolerance of critics." Here again was Kenyon Cox: "The real meaning of the Cubist movement is nothing else than the total destruction of the art of painting"; Cézanne "seems to me absolutely without talent"; "this kind of art [may] corrupt public taste and stimulate an appetite for excitement that is as dangerous as the appetite for any other poisonous drug"; "do not allow yourselves to be blinded by the sophistries of the foolish dupes or the self-interested exploiters of all this charlatanry." And Cortissoz on the Post-Impressionists: "work not only incompetent, but grotesque. It has led them from complacency to what I can only describe as insolence"; their "oracular assertion that the statues and pictures are beautiful and great is merely so much impudence." Blashfield, finally, after deploring "a license to omit painstaking care, coherent thinking, an incitement to violence as compelling attention," simply ended with a cry of self-defense: "*there is no dead art*."

Thus the Temple on the coming of the New. And thus the Academy's collective impulse toward vituperation—delivered repeatedly, resentfully, remorselessly, relentlessly; and aimed at the New in music, painting, sculpture, literature. And not only here. Whatever was new in the evolving aspirations of women toward inclusion and equality was repudiated. New immigrants (no longer of familial Anglo-Saxon stock, many of whom were to enrich American literature, art, and music) were repudiated. Any alteration of nineteenth-century standards of piety or learning was repudiated. In a 1922 address, Owen Wister, author of *The Virginian*, ostensibly lauding "the permanent hoard of human knowledge," offered a list of "certain menaces to our chance for great literature":

> We are developing ragtime religion. Homer and Virgil were founded on a serious faith. . . . The classics are in eclipse. To that star all intellect has hitched its wagon. Literature has become a feminine subject in our seats of learning. What female Shakespeare has ever lived? Recent arrivals pollute the original spring. . . . It would be well for us if many recent arrivals would become departures.

Across the water Virginia Woolf, too, was speculating on the absence of a female Shakespeare, though from another viewpoint. And in the very bowels of the Academy, in a letter to President Sloane on October 22, 1921, loyal Mrs. Vanamee herself—in the name of the logic of precedent—was protesting the exclusion of women:

> You will be astonished to learn that I found a volume of Institute Minutes which was once loaned to Mr. Johnson and in looking through it this morning we found a record of [Julia Ward] Howe's election to the Institute. It seems she was regularly [i.e., routinely] nominated and regularly elected for at that time [1907] there was no ruling against women's being elected to the Institute. Mrs. Howe's name has always been included among the names of "Deceased Members of the Institute." Of course this makes the ruling of yesterday entirely out of order.

Mrs. Vanamee recommended that "any record of what occurred" (meaning the entire set of minutes of the meeting ruling against admission of women) be expunged in a little act of hanky-panky. Accordingly, the culpable minutes were somehow spirited away,

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never again to emerge—but the issue continued to fester, and it would be another five years before enough ballots could be counted in favor of admission. Julia Ward Howe's membership—for the three feeble years before her death at age ninety-one—was argued against as "an error of procedure." Besides, as the author of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," she was less a woman than a national monument, one of those ideal female symbol-figures specialized in by Daniel Chester French.

In the ballots of 1923—asking directly, "Do you favor the admission of women to the National Institute of Arts and Letters?"—sometimes a simple "no" was not enough to satisfy the spleen of an elderly gentleman born before or during the Civil War. "NO I DO NOT," roared the painter Whitney Warren. "A categorical NO," announced the composer Arthur Bird, and followed up with a tirade:

> To express my decided antipathy against this proposed innovation you will notice that I have added *categorical*. I have lately in the Chicago Musical Leader ventilated my opinion on this subject in a short exposé. The occasion of a woman attempting to conduct the Philharmonic orchestra here at a symphony concert gave me a long awaited opportunity to mouth a short but vigorous sally . . . against the attempts of a certain clan of womanhood to try to do things the feminine gender is by nature utterly incapable of doing and hooting at those things for which it is by nature predestined. What on earth *have or ever will have women* to do with science, art and letters (in the highest sense of the words) or are they satisfied to play a very mediocre second fiddle? It is needless to hide the naked fact, conceal the plain truth, that the moment the fair sex drops its skirts, throws aside guiltiness, modesty, refinement, all that gentility that we know and love so much, *don the leather breeches*, *beat the drum*, then lackaday to all the poetry of this life, away with the sentiments so expressive in Heine's poem so prettily and cleverly translated by our Longfellow, "The sea hath its pearls," etc. Then we shall say "For women must work and fight, men weep and spin." Id est—the world turned upside down.

Tirades on the one hand, gloatings on the other. "I rejoice exceedingly," the writer James Ford Rhodes wrote in 1918 to Robert Underwood Johnson (who, surprisingly, favored women's admission), "that you were beaten on the women question. What would you do with the 'wimmin' at the dinners at the University Club? . . . A hysteria is going over the country, showing itself in women's suffrage and Prohibition." (The Temple may have been able to do without women at dinner, but it rarely permitted itself to do without booze, and regularly circumvented the Eighteenth Amendment—*viz.*, "My dear Cass, Please send the bottle of Gin for the Institute dinner, carefully wrapped up so as to conceal its identity." "My dear Thorndike, Will you please send the bottle of Gin, carefully wrapped up so that it will not look suspicious.")

In the midst of all these fulminations and refusals and repudiations (always excepting the gin), there was, nevertheless, one moment early in the Academy's third decade that hinted at a glimmer of doubt, perhaps even of self-criticism. It was, in fact, a kind of bloodless insurrection or palace coup, and took place behind Robert Underwood Johnson's formidable back. The rebel in the case was Hamlin Garland, author of *A Son of the Middle Border*, a school classic of the last generation. Wisconsin-born, Garland grew up in the drudging privations of farm life, at home in the unpolished—and impoverished—regions of Iowa, California, and the Dakotas. Unlike Johnson (out of whom the last traces of Indiana had long since been squeezed), Garland could never have been mistaken for a formal Easterner. His perspectives were wider and more sympathetic than many of his colleagues'; he was a liberal who wrote seriously on social reform. His name was irrefutably linked with narrative realism, but he was a realist in the more everyday sense as well: he looked around

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and saw an Academy of fatigued and retrograde gentlemen stuck fast in a narrow mold. "We must avoid the appearance of a club of old fogies," he warned, and kept an eye out for a chance to invigorate the membership.

The chance came in 1920, when President Wilson (an Academy member since 1908) appointed Johnson to be Ambassador to Italy, and Garland stepped in as the Academy's Acting Secretary. In Johnson's absence, Garland's first target was Johnson himself: "We cannot become a 'one man organization,' no matter how fine that man may be." To Brander Matthews he wrote, "Now is the time to make the Academy known. If we let this chance pass we shall be a Johnson Institution for the rest of our lives. . . . We can't be run by a volunteer member seventy years of age. . . . We are called . . . that Johnson thing." He noted "the age and growing infirmity of many of our members who are losing interest in the organization" and "the fact that our membership is scattered as well as aged and preoccupied. . . . We should draw closer," he advised, "and take the future of the Academy much more seriously than we have heretofore done. . . . We must not lose touch with youth. We should not be known as 'a senile institution.' We must assume to lead in the progress of the Nation."

Yet Garland's ideas for Academy programs turned out to be less than revolutionary: "The Academy by a Lecture Foundation should offer to the Nation a series of addresses on American Arts and Letters in which the most vigorous propaganda for the good as against the bad should be carried forward. We should stand against all literary pandering, all corrupting influences"—an exhortation that might easily have been uttered by any of the old fogies had it not concluded with a call to "make it plain that we are for progress, that it is our plan to hasten and direct the advance. That we intend to recognize the man of genius whether in the Academy or not." He proposed the election of honorary foreign members, so that the Academy's "penumbra can extend throughout the world." As for the native membership, he warned against "the choice of a scholar who is known only to a few other scholars." "There is always the danger of electing too many men who are merely college professors. The Academy," he insisted, "cannot afford to elect a classicist in preference to the man of original genius." And there was only one kind of genius he really wanted: "The Academy membership must be kept predominantly literary or the Academy will lose power. The moment the Academy is overbalanced on the art side it loses standing, a result which may be unjust but it is true." He pushed for fame: "A man may be chosen who is recognized by the great public as a figure. Edwin Markham for example does not have to be explained. He is in Who's Who. Some of the Academy elections have to be explained even to members." He pushed for zeal: "men who will come to the meetings. . . . Every time the Academy takes in a man who has a sort of contempt for what it is trying to do it weakens the organization." He pushed above all for the Academy as "an inspiration to young men," and called for the establishment of annual awards to "young workers in the five arts."

And as a final push, though Johnson was still safely in Italy, Garland considered how to suppress him on his return: "Johnson is ex-officio on all committees," he conceded, but "should not be Chairman." In the course of time Garland proposed an even more radical solution—the Academy should get rid of Johnson altogether: "The returning secretary is an old man, preoccupied (as the rest of us are) with personal work of his own. He cannot give his entire mind to the Academy and as he is a member, it is not desirable that he should. It is not a good thing to have any one member known as the manager of the organization. The managing Secretary should be an outside man on a salary."

At the end of the day Garland was happy to have Johnson back. The truth was that Johnson *could* give his entire mind to the Academy, and had always been eager to do

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exactly that. The administrative minutiae that Johnson reveled in ultimately made Garland grumble—he was clearly sick of contending with old-fogey letters like the two that arrived a month apart in the fall of 1921, from Abbott Lawrence Lowell, the President of Harvard:

> I do not know whether I shall be able to be present at the meeting on November 2nd; but I want to suggest that it would be well for the Academy, which stands for Letters, to use the best English in its communications to members, and say "I shall," or "shall not, be present,"—not "I will, or will not."

> I do not know what the duties of the Education Committee of the American Academy of Arts and Letters are. I am very glad to serve on the Committee; but it seems to me that it would be a great mistake for the Academy to attempt to do anything or express an opinion about education.

Like Lowell, the membership, reluctant to be more activist than they had been under Johnson, resisted Garland's pressure for broader concern and greater participation. "The lack of interest and cohesion is pitiful," he wrote to President Sloane. And to Matthews he complained, "I am just downright discouraged. . . . The truth is we are a lot of 'elderly old parties' who don't care very much whether school keeps or not—we'd rather not if it involves any janitor work on our part. . . . I cannot be a party to a passive policy." The Academy, it seemed, liked it well enough that Johnson ran a one-man establishment, and Garland himself was feeling more and more the imposition on his own literary productivity. "I am carrying so much of the detail work of the Academy at this time," he moaned one year into his service as Acting Secretary, "that I have no leisure for my own writing." Two years later he was in a state of full surrender, and could hardly wait for the finish of Johnson's ambassadorial stint. "As I see it now there will be no one but Johnson to carry on the work and I withdraw all opposition to him." And: "I've been a nuisance to little effect and shall turn the Office of Secretary over to Johnson the moment he reaches the building. It is a thankless task for any man."

Thankless for any but Robert Underwood Johnson. Though his beard may have grown whiter, he resumed his position at the helm as energetically as before: it was as if Italy had never intervened.

Perhaps the most Johnsonian display of taste burst out in 1924, the year Robert Frost won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry and the Academy voted not to award its Gold Medal to anyone at all. According to the minutes of October 10th, Johnson protested this decision, "favoring as the recipient Miss Edith M. Thomas, whose seventieth birthday has just occurred. Mr. Johnson spoke in high appreciation of the substance and style of Miss Thomas's work, which he regarded as the summit of contemporary American poetry." Not that this was Johnson's first salvo on behalf of the summit. He had begun to urge Miss Thomas's cause six years earlier; apparently he regarded her as his most incendiary weapon in the war on free verse. "Aside from her professional merits and the nobility of her character," he pressed, "the spiritual tone of her work . . . would be all the more timely because of the widespread misconceptions in the public mind concerning the art of poetry, due to the vogue of formless, whimsical and eccentric productions . . . That the Academy should honor a poetic artist of so fine a strain as Miss Thomas would be to throw the force of its influence against the lawlessness of the time that has invaded all the Arts." And even by 1926—it was now four years since the landmark appearance of *The Waste Land*—Johnson was still not giving up on Edith Thomas: "I believe that in some respects she has seen more deeply and reported more melodiously the evanescent phases of the borderland of the soul than any other American poet except Ralph Waldo Emerson."

In 1925 the vote for the newly established William Dean Howells Medal, given "in recognition of the most distinguished work

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of fiction published during the preceding five years," went to Mary E. Wilkins Freeman for her depiction of "Old New England, New England before the coming of the French Canadian and the Italian peasant. . . . The body of her work remains of the Anglo-Saxon order." (Other American fiction published in that *annus mirabilis* of 1925 included *The Professor's House*, by Willa Cather, who was elected to the Institute in 1929; *In Our Time*, short stories by Ernest Hemingway, never admitted to membership; *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald, also never admitted; *An American Tragedy*, by Theodore Dreiser, another nonmember; *Manhattan Transfer*, by John Dos Passos, admitted in 1937; and *The Making of Americans*, by Gertrude Stein, who of all American writers was least likely to be nominated.) At the same time the vote in the Institute for the Gold Medal for Belles Lettres landed on William Crary Brownell, an Academy member who had the distinction of serving as Edith Wharton's editor at Scribner's. Wharton herself was still unadmitted. In 1926, the Gold Medal for Sculpture was presented to Herbert Adams, the Academician who had designed the Academy's bronze doors, with their inscription: GREAT MEN ARE THEY WHO SEE THAT THOUGHTS RULE THE WORLD. In 1927, William Milligan Sloane won the Gold Medal for Biography and History; Johnson had successfully nominated the Academy's President for the Academy's own award.

But it would be misleading to infer that the Academy was fixed only on itself in these years. One ambitious plan for the general enlightenment was to establish an art museum in every state lacking one. "The commanding motive," Johnson explained in 1925, was to bring "knowledge of the best painting and sculpture to populations that are not able to visit the great centers." Doggedly optimistic, Johnson traveled from city to city searching for donors and making speeches—"I am well, but a bit tired of my own voice," he reported to Mrs. Vanamee. The idea fell through, possibly because, as Johnson noted, "there is an impasse between the artistic and the commercial temperament." A second attempt to widen the Academy's purview—its affiliation with the American Academy in Rome—was more efficacious, and endured. And the course of public lectures the Academy launched in Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, Philadelphia, and other venues frequently aspired to a global embrace: "The Literature of Japan"; "The Spirit of Italy"; talks on Scandinavia, France, Russia; and, following the war, an entire series on "The Failure of German Kultur" (though these were rather more punitive than embracing). Relations were kept up with the Belgian and French Academies. Letters of invitation—and homage—went often to British men of letters. In 1919, Maurice Maeterlinck, the 1911 Nobel Laureate, visited the Academy as an honored literary guest from Belgium. The novelist Vicente Blasco Ibáñez came from Spain.

Spain, Italy, Belgium, France, Canada, and Britain all sent laudatory messages to the Academy's William Dean Howells memorial meeting in March of 1921; Rudyard Kipling's contribution, representing England, brought a vigorous insight into the American literary past—with more conviction, possibly, than some of the narrowly Anglophile Academicians themselves (always conscious of what they saw as American marginality with regard to European models) could wholeheartedly summon. Despite the international tributes solicited from overseas, and despite the number of speakers and subjects ("Howells the Novelist," "Howells the Dramatist," "Howells the Humorist," etc.), some indeterminate trace of the intramural nevertheless clung to the Howells commemoration—a touch of the gentleman's club. The event rises out of the record less as a national literary celebration than as an Academy period piece. The speakers, Academy members all, were once again identifiable by their common idiom—the idiom of backward-looking gentility, hence of diminishment. Press attention was meager.

Three years later, H.L. Mencken, in an article headlined "No Head for Howells' Hat"

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in the Detroit *News* of March 23, 1924, took up a different approach to Howells. "Suppose," he wrote, "Henrik Ibsen and Anatole France were still alive and on their way to the United States on a lecture tour, or to study prohibition and sex hygiene, or to pay their respects to Dr. Coolidge . . . who would go down the bay in a revenue cutter to meet them . . . who to represent American literature?" Represent it, he explained, "in a tasteful and resounding manner." "So long as Howells kept his legs," Mencken went on, "he was chosen almost automatically for all such jobs, for he was dean of the national letters and acknowledged to be such by everyone. Moreover, he had experience at the work and a natural gift for it. He looked well in funeral garments. He had a noble and ancient head. He made a neat and caressing speech. He understood etiquette."

But the price of Mencken's esteem for Howells, however soaked in the Mencken satire, was disesteem for the Academy:

> Who is to represent [American literature] today? I search the country without finding a single candidate, to say nothing of a whole posse. Turn, for example, to the mystic nobles of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. I pick out five at random: William C. Brownell, Robert Underwood Johnson, Hamlin Garland, Bliss Perry, and Henry Van Dyke. What is wrong with them? The plain but dreadful fact that no literary foreigner has ever heard of them—that their appearance on the deck of his incoming barge would puzzle and alarm him and probably cause him to call for the police.
>
> These men do not lack the homely virtues. They all spell correctly, write neatly and print nothing that is not constructive. In the whole five of them there is not enough sin to raise a congressman's temperature one-hundredth of a degree. But they are devoid of what is essential to the official life; they have, so to speak, no stage presence. There is nothing rotund and gaudy about them. No public and unanimous reverence bathes them. What they write or say never causes any talk. To be welcomed by them jointly or severally would appear to Thomas Hardy or Gabriele d'Annunzio as equal to being welcomed by representatives of the St. Joe, Mo., Rotary Club.

On the heels of the Howells commemoration came the Academy's 1922 memorial to John Burroughs, the naturalist, a member since 1905. This was marked by a lengthy address entitled "The Racial Soul of John Burroughs," by Henry Fairfield Osborn (who was *not* an Academy member)—a talk of a certain brightness and charm until it discloses its dubious thesis: the existence of "racial aptitudes." "The *racial* creative spirit of man always reacts to its own historic racial environment, into the remote past." "Have we not reason to believe that there is a *racial soul* as well as a racial mind, a racial system of morals, a racial anatomy?" In short, it was his "northern heredity" that drew Burroughs to become "the poet of our robins, of our apple trees, of the beauties of our forests and farms," and "the ardent and sometimes violent prophet of conservation." There is no evidence that any of Osborn's listeners demurred from a theory linking conservation of forests to northern European genes.

In 1925 Robert Underwood Johnson was still incorrigibly at war with the new poets. The recoil from modernism he enshrined as a cause; and what was Johnson's cause was bound to become the Academy's cause, very nearly its *raison d'être*. (The first cracks in anti-modernism would not occur until late in the decade, and then—torrentially—in the 1930s and 1940s.) On November 23, 1925, in a letter to *Who's Who in America*, presenting himself as an incarnation of the Temple's eternality, Johnson requested that he be identified as "an antagonist of free verse and author of a criticism of it in an address before the Academy entitled 'The Glory of Words.'" "The modernists," he complained in that talk, "wish to exalt into poetic association words that heretofore have not been considered poetic. . . . Naturally such an attempt is conspicuously deficient in the glory of words." The "metrical product of the revolutionists," he went on, was "unimaginative," "monotonously conventional,"

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and "objectionably sophisticated—individualism run to seed." And: "They are determined to make silk purses out of sows' ears." "Because the Muses no longer rule there must be no allusion to Parnassus; the Muses are not 'factual' and must go by the board." "The chief promise of poetry is to express the pervasive and permanent spiritual forces of all time."

Although Johnson's zeal on behalf of Miss Thomas had failed to win her an Academy honor, his fight against Robert Frost did not abate. To Booth Tarkington he wrote:

> I am very strongly opposed to Frost's nomination on principle. . . . I think both he and Edwin Arlington Robinson who has been nominated are in the main mediocre in their work . . . they are not worthy of consideration for the Academy. . . . We have other men in the Institute who ought to be put forward for the quality of their poetry—Percy MacKaye, Clinton Scollard, Richard Burton, Brian Hooker, Don Marquis, Charles deKay and John Finley. Each one of these men has done beautiful work.

To our ears these are largely unrecognizable minor deities. Johnson's own Parnassus has not gathered them to its bosom. And if Polyhymnia, having anointed (sparingly) Edward MacDowell and Victor Herbert, remains cool to Frederick Shepherd Converse and George Whitefield Chadwick, while smiling palely on Horatio Parker chiefly for his connection with Charles Ives, what of the painters' Muse? Edith Thomas as poet and John Powell as composer may be confined to the category of antiquarian curios, but (for instance) Joseph Pennell and Childe Hassam are not. (Anyone examining the superbly evocative Pennell drawings that accompany Henry James's *Collected Travel Writings*, reissued in 1993 by the Library of America, will be stirred by what we call permanence in art: that which cannot "date.")

Repeatedly infuriated by the encroachments of new modes of literary expression and helpless before its tide—Robinson and Frost were both admitted to the Academy, in 1927 and 1930 respectively—Johnson was determined that the Temple should make an indelible statement at least in the graphic arts. One effort toward that end, the attempt to put a museum in every state, fizzled. A second idea both survived and prospered: this was to establish a collection by Academicians and other American painters. Johnson worked closely with the earliest Committee on Art, then known as the Committee on Art Censorship—a name that may suggest the prescriptive tastes of its three members: the painter and critic Kenyon Cox, the sculptor Herbert Adams, and the architect Cass Gilbert. Paintings were solicited from private collectors and through bequests. Since one of Johnson's motives was to promote and augment the influence of the Academy, it is no wonder that portraits dominated, or that the collection was based, by and large, on the products of its own members. Johnson was relentless in going after contributions, especially from the freshly widowed wives of deceased Academicians.

But the pressure for indigenous American achievement—a sign of the early Academy's sense of its own inferiority before the age and weight of Europe's cultural cargo—was nowhere more pronounced than in the preoccupation with American speech. President Sloane warned of "a stream of linguistic tendency, prone to dangerous flood and devastating inundation," alluding no doubt to the postwar immigration. Yet native-born journalists were almost as perilous a threat as foreigners spilling into the country: "How are we to justify the diction of the press," William Roscoe Thayer inquired, "through which pours an incessant stream of slang, vulgarism, grammatical blunders, and rhetorical crudity?" The function of the Academy, Johnson grandly noted, was to reject "invasions from the ribbon counter" and to "stand against the slovenly, and for the dignified and effective use of words."

The ribbon counter has vanished; it is a different Academy today—diverse, welcoming,

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lavishly encouraging to beginners in the arts. Yet what Hamlin Garland remarked on long ago remains: a quantity of seasoned gray heads—few of whom, however, are polemically inclined to retrogressive views. Crusty elitism is out. The presence of women goes unquestioned. Ethnic parochialism is condemned. No one regards experiment as a revolutionary danger. And by now modernism, which seventy years ago seemed so disruptive to the history-minded, is itself an entrenched tradition with a lengthening history of its own—even fading off into the kind of old-fashionedness that derives from repetitiveness, imitation, overfamiliarity. Modernism has grown as tranquil as Robert Underwood Johnson's Parnassus; and what postmodernism is, or will become, we hardly know.

Do these white-bearded, high-collared gentlemen of the old Academy—who live out the nineteenth century's aesthetic and intellectual passions right up to the lip of the Great Depression—strike us as "quaint"? Condescending and unholy word! Unholy, because it forgets that death and distance beckon us, too: our turn lies just ahead. Possibly we are already quaintly clothed, as unaware that we are retrograde as Kenyon Cox and Royal Cortissoz before Matisse, or Robert Underwood Johnson in the face of T. S. Eliot and Marianne Moore. Despite our ingrained modernist heritage, we may, after all, discover ourselves to be more closely linked to the print-loyal denizens of the Twenties Temple than we are to the cybernetic future. If a brittle and browning 1924 Mencken clipping testifies to the cultural irrelevance of the official humanists of two generations ago, the loss of a fixed and bound text, if it occurs, may be as cataclysmic for us as Cubism was to the votaries of Beaux-Arts.

And if time has reduced Robert Underwood Johnson and his solemnly spiritualized colleagues to toys for our irony, what does that signify? Probably that (given our modernist habits) we value irony more than dignity, and what does *that* signify? The "mystic nobles," as Mencken called them, of the Academy's third decade lacked irony; but they also lacked cynicism. When they sermonized on "nobility of character," they believed in its likelihood, and even in its actual presence. When Johnson honored "Beauty changeless and divine," he took it for granted that the continuity of a civilization is a sacred covenant. A review of *American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century*, a pair of Library of America volumes published in 1993 and edited by John Hollander, a contemporary Academician, adds this perspective: "Just as the spare acerbity of early modernism must have looked bracingly astringent to writers and readers grown weary of nineteenth-century rotundities, so today . . . these relics of another age are deeply refreshing."

We who are postmodern inheritors of the violent whole of the twentieth century no longer dare to parade—even if we privately hold them—convictions of virtue, harmony, nobility, wisdom, beauty; or of their sources. But (setting aside irony, satire, condescension, and the always arrogant power of the present to diminish the past), the ideals of the Temple, exactly as Johnson conceived them, *are* refreshing to an era tormented by unimaginable atrocity and justifiable cynicism. Nor are those ideals precisely "relics." Suppose Johnson had chosen Frank Lloyd Wright as architect for the new building; what might the Academy have looked like then? If it is good to have the Guggenheim Museum's inventiveness, it is also good to have the Academy's Venetian palace, just as Stanford White and Charles McKim dreamed it.

Or what if the Academy's art committee had allied itself with, say, Alfred Stieglitz's "291" gallery, the heart and muscle of the modernist cause? What if Robert Frost and Charles Ives had been admitted to membership in 1918? Or H. L. Mencken?

Such speculations instantly annihilate the history of the Temple's credo between the Great War and the Great Depression. Worse, they wipe out the name and (noble) character of the redoubtable Robert Underwood Johnson, and who would want that?

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Debasing Brancusi

by Sidney Geist

For an old Brancusi hand like me, the dust jacket of Anna Chave's recent book on the sculptor could only be a bad omen.[1] It shows a long, slender, black marble *Bird in Space* mounted on a tall base, the whole so slanted as to appear in danger of falling off the book. The typography, too, is slanted every which way off the horizontal; the author's name is angled down at the title, *Constantin Brancusi*, with a strong hint of confrontation, even conflict. There follows the book's subtitle, "Shifting the Bases of Art," an unsettling formula, because if the jacket layout says anything, it is not "shifting," but "tipping" or "toppling"—which is another matter. Add to this a doubt about who is doing the "shifting." Type-size indicates Chave; proximity to the name above, Brancusi. Add also the double sense of "bases," as the plural of both "base" and "basis."

The jacket, then, projects an ambiguous message, a disturbing "polyvalency" of the kind that Anna Chave, an associate professor at Queens College, so often finds in her subject. Book-design gamesmanship continues by other means. The white of the jacket darkens to the gray of the binding and again to the black of the endpapers. For an observer like me, who thinks of Brancusi's sculpture as a white art, calling for and giving off light, this black is doubly dire in view of his habitual white working clothes and the white-walled studio that always impressed his visitors. This volume's envelope creates, surely by intention, a crumbling, somber setting for the text within.

The long text is preceded by an important preface, which tells us at once that we are in the realm of feminist criticism. Brancusi is characterized as a "canonical male modernist" and a "white heterosexual male of a certain class," whose work is intended for the same class. At these levels of description, I usually think of him as a marvelously poetic, extraordinarily skillful sculptor on the one hand, and a short, bearded Romanian on the other. Since Chave tells us that the book is concerned with "how abstract art signifies" —the concern also of her bold study (1989) of the "classic" Mark Rothko—she further characterizes Brancusi as an abstract artist. That Brancusi and Rothko are both *abstract* artists is passing strange, for, with few exceptions, Brancusi's sculpture depicts subjects: women, children, men, animals. The Rothko study showed no sign of a feminist outlook, but we learn that after the thesis from which it developed was completed (1982), the tools were forged which released "exhilarating new possibilities for writing feminist art histories." Thus, Chave is now interested in such matters as "the repression of the evident . . . sexual imagery in Brancusi's work" and "of the ways his art articulates difference." The first of these must make me blink as I recall *The Kiss* in its

1 *Constantin Brancusi: Shifting the Bases of Art*, by Anna C. Chave; Yale University Press, 335 pages, $50.

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several versions, *Princess X*, and the phallic *Torso of a Young Man*. Nevertheless, she intends to show "how abstract art may be sexually inscribed." This promises to be a fresh approach to Brancusi.

Chave's scholarship is propelled by an interest in "the subject," of which she names three: "the subject of the work of art" (so there *are* subjects! but will they be what most of us think of as subjects?), "the subject who produces it," that is, the sculptor, "and the subject who consumes it." This last has been known in civilized society as the viewer, but he—or she—has been transformed by "reception" theory into the party of the first part. The produce/consume syndrome is, of course, dourly Marxist; "consumes," with its connotations of "ingests" and "uses up," augurs no good.

A growing unease is confirmed by the final words of the preface. The above "subjects"—for two of which the term is a misnomer—introduce Chave's concern for "how cultural artifacts help function to constitute subjectivity." So the point of her three "subjects" is to construct a verbal chute for the slide into "subjectivity" (a quite different matter), on the slippery language of "help function to constitute." This subjectivity in the presence of art leads to acts of "authorship" (in quotes)—justified on the ground that disinterested, uninformed, or neutral viewing is an impossibility. There are of course innumerable ways of looking at art. The option of "authorship" seems to spring from resentment—resentment of excellence, especially excellence in a man. "What inevitably sways these acts of 'authorship,' however, is the abiding influence of canonical narratives"—that is, previously published critical studies.

Finally, Chave writes that "the motivation for [this study] was precisely this: to account for the deep pleasures I derive from Brancusi's searching, seductive and hopeful art, and so, in that process, to open new positions from which to view it or become its 'author.'" The advocacy of Brancusi implied in the first half of this sentence comes as a surprise, indeed is a *non sequitur* in a preface which otherwise gives no hint of a connection between Brancusi's art and pleasure. Chave's hope to create "authors" instead of, say, admirers or appreciators, or even critics, is a cunning revision of her alleged enthusiasm.

She has done her homework. She has been to Romania, where she visited Tirgu Jiu and saw the scattered, more intimate works, taking photographs which, unfortunately, leave much to be desired. Since Brancusi's death in 1957, the literature on him has burgeoned, and on both sides of that date Chave has read a great deal of it—in books, magazines, and newspaper accounts, in unpublished letters, manuscripts, theses, and archival materials, with special attention, to be sure, to the groundbreaking "canonical narratives" which she now challenges. Her citations from these diverse sources are so numerous as to constitute a social history of the public reaction to Brancusi, scattered though it may be throughout her very full volume; they are also often contradictory, variously serious and silly, although usually the latter. Most of the time Chave appears to be a non-committal recorder; when she does choose between alternatives, it is to side with the more banal or biting of them. Much of this material flows over into the notes, of which there are 998, covering thirty-nine double-column quarto pages of small type. These notes are about two-thirds as long as the text of my *Brancusi: A Study of the Sculpture* (1968). Whereas every item in my bibliography included a reference to Brancusi, Chave's selected bibliography lists many scholarly studies in several fields not concerned with Brancusi.

She approaches the sculpture with a set of themes, or conceits, or obsessions (for they develop in this fashion): the egg, the severed head, the phallus, the androgyne, the hermaphrodite—and the greatest of these is the phallus. Once the joinery between sculpture and theme has been effected, it is illuminated, endorsed, or enhanced by the literature of mythology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, and feminist literary criticism. Neo-

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and anti-Malthusianism, James Clifford on the "ethnographic attitude," Hinduism, Barbara Johnson on Mallarmé, Apollinaire's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, among other subjects, are brought to bear on the sculpture, a recourse encouraged by Brancusi's titling of his works with names like *Prometheus*, *Narcissus*, and *Beginning of the World*.

Abstractly considered, this venture in creating a "hermeneutic model of psychopoetics" is impressive. In the event, it is carried out by a bending, breaking, and falsification of the evidence, by a stonewalling of obvious contradictions, by a tendentious vocabulary, and by arguments based on "could" and "can" and "might be." Thus, *Beginning of the World*, a smooth, unbroken ovoid, "might evoke a severed head," but on the next page "might be said to evoke a kind of pregnant head." Yet again, "as a decapitated, neutered head, it may remind us . . . of separation, violence, and death." Extraordinarily (and still on the same page), it "is sexually undecidable, androgynous."

Chave's research is astonishing in its variety, especially in view of its frequent irrelevance. It means to crush its real subject—Brancusi's art—by both its density and content; it is sure to be crushing to the "subject who consumes it." While it is with fear and trembling that I deploy what Freud I have, Chave handles both standard and revisionist psychoanalysis with brio, beating up the old phallocentric icon whenever possible. I have little Lacan and much less Baudrillard, Bakhtin, and Habermas, not to mention M. Bal, B. Johnson, J. Mitchell, A. Jardine, T. de Lauretis, E. Showalter, S. Gubar, S. Gilbert, and others.

For several reasons, this review is inescapably personal. I have published voluminously on the sculptor since 1960, and Chave devotes the first paragraph of her acknowledgments to noting these exertions with a generosity of which I will hardly be able to acquit myself. On the other hand, my study of 1968 is, by its date and character, one of the chief "canonical narratives" on which she takes aim, the other being Ezra Pound's writings on the sculptor.

Chave maintains that "the monuments at Tirgu Jiu are far from the sculptor's most successful work, as the fairly intimate scale he typically favored better served his vision." My first reaction to this is, Another county heard from. Apart from the fact that the three works in Tirgu Jiu constitute a *single* monument, no one has insisted that it is his "most successful work," though it is generally thought to be the most successful public monument of the century, and Brancusi surely considered it the culminating work of his career. How, in any case, is one to compare this tripartite monument, disposed on an axis a mile and a quarter long, with the intimate works? One might as well compare a reistafel and a madeleine. But assuming that the smaller works are more successful than the emplacement at Tirgu Jiu, let's see how Chave describes them.

The *Portrait of Nicolae Darascu* has "an amputated right arm."

Bust of a Boy is "conspicuously and inexplicably missing [its] right shoulder." The model was blind, a factor not mentioned.

Torment, "where the violence suggested by the title is conveyed by the child's contorted, grimacing pose." What's a grimacing pose? The face itself shows no grimace—but Chave's bad photograph makes this work illegible.

In *The Kiss*, "the man and woman have been, as it were, disfigured, their limbs and other features not so much articulated as sketched or engraved on a roughly hewn cube of stone." Again, it "looks almost like a block of stone fresh from the quarry"; it is "a rudimentary stone cube engraved with the basic outlines of a human couple." Is this *The Kiss* we know and love? The work shows no evidence of being "roughly hewn," every surface having been worked by the sculptor. As for "engraved," in my own description of *The Kiss* I observed, "If there is a problem here, it lies in the round, ropelike *separable* character of the arms which violates the continuity of the stony matter."

The "severed head of *Sleeping Muse*" shows the "mere trace of the mere face of a mere unconscious woman." Alternatively

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this "severed head" is an "egglike head"; a later version has a "hyper-goitrous throat." The sculptor "killed his Muses again and again."

In the "somewhat comical looking *Mademoiselle Pogany I*," Chave notes "her egglike head, her bug eyes." She underscores a derisive review with her own adverb: "a reviewer complained in 1913 about the grotesquely 'egg-headed, pop-eyed Mlle. Poganys.'"

The *Cock* "resembled a French pot rack."

"The Africanized *First Step* . . . had a stump where its left arm should be."

Eve is an "Africanesque freak," which originally had a "broomsticklike leg." This element was very close to three inches thick and fifteen inches long—far from "broomsticklike." But a sense—every sense—of proportion is absent from this book.

Adam and Eve is "a two-in-one, or hermaphrodite." Actually, it's a one-on-one, *Eve* being carried on the head of *Adam*, with a thick block of wood between them, the whole hardly constituting a hermaphrodite.

"The grotesque and Africanized aspect of Brancusi's effigy of *Socrates*, the father of ancient philosophy . . ."

In Brancusi's "practice of decapitating, dismembering, and castrating his human figures," he is modernism's first serial mutilater.

"A young French girl has been left armless."

The Chief is another severed head, supported on a "plain stack of blocks," which serves as a "surrogate body." It is, of course, no more a "body" or "surrogate" than any base supporting any head or bust for the last two thousand years.

Brancusi described the ovoidal *Sculpture for the Blind* as "an egg where little cubes seethe, a human skull." Chave glosses: "But a skull is what remains of a head when everything else has rotted away." Her study is marked with other such passages, equally pointless and even more grisly.

In any case, if the smaller sculptures are more successful than the Tirgu Jiu monument, it is difficult to imagine how low the monument is on Chave's scale of things.

The sculptor fares no better than his creations, countless references to him having the effect of belittling, diminishing, denigrating—a fresh approach. He was, for example, a "grammar-school dropout." This loaded, anachronistic term does not cope with the complicated matter of his leaving home. He "managed to distance himself from his origins in the remote hamlet of Hobitza by assimilating the high-flown rhetoric of academic sculpture." Well, yes, many years later he studied at the Academy in Bucharest. We are told that at the age of thirty, "Brancusi remained too uncertain to begin work on his own, and seeking yet another mentor," went to work for several months in Rodin's studio. Any young sculptor would have been glad of the chance to be near the Master, but the main reason Brancusi went to him was that he was broke and living in a *sixième* crowded with his work. The moment he got the commission for the funerary work in Buzau, he left Rodin and rented a studio. In a few months the "uncertain" sculptor made the marvelous *Prayer* and a number of other excellent pieces.

Later on he "tended to deny, or at least omit mentioning, his use of assistants." Which was it? These are two quite different tendencies. Was the presence of a series of assistants a secret? In the course of time there were about twenty of them—all artists with their own careers, some of whom became well known, and, in one case, world famous—and they made no secret of the matter. It does not occur to Chave that Brancusi didn't talk about assistants out of kindness, out of tact. Indeed, tact appears in this book only as the result of a typographical slip which divides the word "intact" into two words.

Brancusi had a "mongrel self-identity." He is still an "émigré artist" with a "deep sense of deracination" in 1920—when he had been in Paris for sixteen years. He is the "egg-making Brancusi," who "concocted" his images. Early on there is reference to "his fairly discreet sexual behavior"; toward the end, he is characterized as "a lothario who could not face the consequences of his licen-

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tious behavior." Although he spoke glowingly of love, marriage, and procreation, "hypocritically, he never married."

Yet it would seem that between perfection of the work and perfection of the life, he chose the former, or maybe it fell out that way. He made mistakes, he suffered, he sometimes caused others to suffer. He was charming, intelligent, *rusé* and innocent, generous, adventurous, a hard worker, a craftsman without equal, a subtle artist, a great spirit—and a good cook. Nothing of this is suggested by Chave, whose critical fervor has driven out any feeling for the difficulty of art and the difficulty of living. Ah, to be a good and a happy artist, a Rubens, a Pissarro.

A photograph of Brancusi crowded between Duchamp and Tristan Tzara, taken by Brancusi himself, shows him "squeezing the camera's suggestively bulb-shaped plunger in his crotch." This pretty observation must be amended by the fact that the sculptor's hands are between his knees.

Witness the "loss of mastery and authority signaled by Brancusi's repudiation of exact anatomical form" and his "denunciation of the . . . academic figurative traditions that have privileged such knowledge"—designated elsewhere, as we have already noted, as "the high-flown rhetoric of academic sculpture." In her repeated criticism of the sculptor's distance from academic values, Chave is not only *retardetaire*: she would keep Brancusi—who never retreated from any formal advance he had made—locked into his Beaux-Arts skills. Quoting and approving of the old jokes and jibes at the expense of modernism, her new philistinism is just like the old. This time it gives notice that Big Brother, of fond memory, has been replaced by Big Sister, that anatomically correct is politically correct, that the promised class act could be proscriptive.

Chave claims that Brancusi, in his old age, "became reclusive and oblivious to the continuing activities of the avant-garde." I managed to see him, in 1949, by calling him on the telephone; as I entered the studio, a young couple were leaving. To Henry Moore's surprise, Brancusi attended the opening of Moore's one-man show in Paris in 1950; he was seventy-four.

Rodin, author of the "simplified conceit, the phallic figure of *Balzac*," becomes a personal target as Chave remarks on his "notoriously erotomaniacal behavior." Eric Shanes, the English author of a book on Brancusi, there describes *White Negress* and *Blond Negress*, in white marble and polished bronze, as expressing "universal beauty underlying the vagaries of outer guise," achieved by "changing the color of the girl from black to white or blond." This is an innocent enough remark, although I don't think Brancusi changed the color of the girl. But Chave writes, "Here is an art historical premise that Hitler himself could love." According to Chave, Margit Pogany "was a bug-eyed, young, Hungarian art student" when she and Brancusi met; in fact she was thirty-one, only three years younger than he, and a painter. Nancy Cunard, among other things the editor and publisher of *Negro Caravan* (1931), is characterized merely as a "slumming, half-breed aristocrat."

The paragraph on *White Negress* is a tissue of innuendo and distortion. "That Brancusi regarded racial difference in unconventional ways is suggested by his *White Negress* and *Blond Negress*," writes Chave. In the former case, the sculptor made "something like a caricature" (not a caricature, but "something like" one?—the work could not be more dignified) "with outsized lips" (which are only full) "and a whimsical topknot of hair." Brancusi's attitude toward blacks is supposedly betrayed not just by his whimsicality, but also by the fact that the motif is rendered "not in dark wood or stone, but in snowy white marble and golden bronze." More exactly, the first marble version (1924), not reproduced or mentioned, is in a veined, cloudy white marble; the larger second version (1928) is in white marble. The two Negress sculptures are the only works in the *oeuvre* to which Chave applies the adjectives "snowy white" and "golden," although they could be used to describe over sixty other sculptures of birds and people. Chave does

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not *say* that the Negress motif had been better done in "dark wood or stone," but this passage is immediately followed by the sentences mentioning Shanes and Hitler, with their nasty implication of racism, and is immediately preceded by this: "The enduring emphasis on the purity of Brancusi's work bears scrutiny nonetheless for what it reveals about the qualities critics have persistently valued in his art . . . for the logic of purification and the related logic of contamination are, after all, the logic of racism." This amazing logic arises from a belief in the omnipotence of words—a grownup version of the child's belief in the omnipotence of wishes.

If *White Negress* has to do with "purification," does *Portrait of Mrs. Eugene Meyer, Jr.* have to do with "contamination"? This work is in polished black marble; Mrs. Meyer was white. That the color of Brancusi's material had racist implications is nonsense. Would *White Negress (La Negresse blanche)* have drawn Chave's attention if it had been called, dully, *La Negresse*?

Chave seems unaware that "Brancusi's effigy of *Socrates*, the father of ancient philosophy," is very likely a playful portrait of his dear friend Erik Satie, who was ten years older than the sculptor and himself the author of *Socrate*, "a symphonic drama with voice," as he described it. The two men would address each other as "Socrates" and "Plato." Satie was a famous wit. The unusual titles of his compositions may have inspired Brancusi to devise his own unusual titles—unless one of the links between the men was their common indulgence in wordplay.

A work which calls forth Chave's temper is *Leda*. Cued by this title, she announces: "The rapist and the rape victim." The sculpture shows only two full, rounded forms and the edge along which they are joined. Nothing in this abstract creation—or in the mythological tale which moved Brancusi to make it—suggests violence, resistance or pain. The coupling of mythical woman and swan is denominated rape by Chave since the swan was, as we know, Jupiter in disguise.

In fulfillment of the contract for the *Memorial to Petre Stanescu*, Brancusi placed a bust of Stanescu on a required tall pedestal, and in front of it, on a lower heavy tombstone, the required larger-than-life-size "allegorical figure of a mourning woman," now known as *The Prayer*. The bust is described by Chave as "rendered in a rough and generalized way." Twenty-nine pages later, she writes: "The form of the woman was generalized, deindividualized, and smoothed over, while the bust of the man was recognizable as a particular person." Chave has shifted the generalizing and seems, besides, to be hinting at some hanky-panky, although a bust of a particular man is normally recognizable as being particular, while your allegorical figure is not. The matter becomes clearer—if that is the word—when she averts to an "anonymous woman [who] bows humbly and piously beneath the exalted head of a distinguished man." So that's the trouble: Brancusi, in fulfilling the contract, demeaned an "anonymous woman." There are two small problems here: the "anonymous woman" was not anonymous and not a woman. In her discussion of the monument at Tirgu Jiu, Chave quotes a part of the letter of acceptance Brancusi wrote to "the former student who helped him to obtain the commission." Here is real anonymity, conferred by Chave on a real woman, Militza Patrascu, a Romanian sculptor with a special gift for portraiture, who, when she magnanimously declined the Tirgu Jiu commission in favor of Brancusi, was commissioned to do a different monument in the same town. Her name is disclosed in the eight hundred and forty-seventh footnote of the book.

The Kiss (1907–8), carved a few months after *The Prayer*, would seem to be an excellent site for the study of how sexuality is "inscribed" in Brancusi. But we read: "he generalized and abstracted the figures to the point of rudimentary signs." Not so; they are not abstracted and not signs. "The female figure differs from the male only in the convexity of her chest and the fact that her hair is longer and not worn in bangs." Not so.

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The first difference should read, "the convexity *on* her chest" or "the convexity of her *breast*." For the female figure has a breast which overlaps the male's chest; below its gentle fullness, a small extent of the female chest is visible. That is, it would be visible if there were an illustration nearby, but the sculpture is only illustrated twenty-three pages earlier, the sole numbered reference to this picture being on the page before that. As for the female figure's hair, this is properly described not as "longer" than the male's, but as "long," going all the way down her back; the male's is short.

When it comes to *The Kiss* of 1909, showing two full figures, Chave presents them as "denaturalized," while failing to mention that the female has clearly modeled breasts, and that the female's feet embrace the male's. Having promised to examine "the repression of the ways in which [Brancusi's] art articulates difference," she herself represses an important instance. The embracing female feet were not repressed by me—they were noted at the head of my 1968 account of the work. But I have a suspicion—maybe it is only a wild surmise—that, twenty-six years later, the female body, its parts, and its intimate activities have become unmentionable in the view of feminists. What Chave calls "difference" is always handled with great tact by Brancusi, and never overlooked.

"When I look down at Brancusi's bronze *Young Bird* of 1928 (fig. 2.1) in the Museum of Modern Art, what I see first is my own image, not the bird's face but my face reflected in a round, golden mirror. By moving alongside the sculpture I discover that the flat, polished surface I first gazed into was the plump baby bird's gaping mouth." So begins Chapter Two, "The Reflected and Reflective Gaze: For the Love of Narcissus." The two apparently straightforward sentences present a curious reversal of what actually happened. For Chave had to approach the sculpture before she could look down at her reflected image, and in that approach would have seen its whole shape—described in the next sentence—first. But "I first" is of the essence here.

To continue: "This greedy mouth is the only feature of the bird Brancusi articulated [no belly, spine, tail, beak?]: it has no wings, no legs, no eyes. But I have eyes, and as I travel around the heavy crescent shape of the bird . . . I continue to see myself in the distorting, convex mirrors formed by the surfaces of its body. . . . [M]y image is inextricable from its image, and when I photograph the sculpture, I photograph myself photographing it (fig. 2.2)." In figure 2.1, probably a museum photograph, the image of *Young Bird* is less than two and a half inches high; we are not aware of a photographer. In figure 2.2, Chave's photograph, the sculpture is over seven inches high; the plane of the open mouth—not round—is five inches long and shows Chave's head and her two hands holding a camera. *This* is rape, committed with monumental chutzpah. I have never appreciated the humor in Duchamp's mustaching of *Mona Lisa*, Picasso's overpainting of old paintings, Lichtenstein's revision of Cézanne, Scott Burton's displacement of Brancusi, appropriation art, etc. But whereas these depredations could claim to be in the nature of commentaries on art, Chave's photographic invasion of *Young Bird* is a sheer ego trip.

The trip is not over. "Trapped in the narcissist's predicament, I cannot escape my gaze." But Chave's problem is much simpler: it's her own narcissism that she can't escape. After a review of Narcissus in time and space, in Kristeva and Gide, this chapter, in its last words, returns to Chave herself: "When I see my image reflected in the *Young Bird* . . . I see not only my likeness, but the room and the other people and other works of art in it. . . . [The sculpture's polished surfaces] help me to reenact ritually that primal moment of (mis)recognition when I was transformed from the 'specular *I* into the social *I*,' able to love others beside myself." A footnote refers us to Lacan's essay "The Mirror Stage," in which he theorizes that the child's seeing itself in a mirror for the first time "inaugurates . . . the dialectic that will henceforth link [it] to socially elaborated situations." That dialectic produced a much

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fuller effect in Chave: the ability to love others beside herself. It is a sign of art's power that it should help our critic "reenact ritually" an epiphanic moment while she is looking at the "distorting, convex mirrors" on Brancusi's *Young Bird*, rather than at the true mirrors of a coffee shop or restaurant.

Dissatisfied, in 1909, with a representational marble bust of a woman whose head leans forward to look down, Brancusi recarved it over a period of seven years, retaining the subject—a woman looking at herself in a mirror—although in much stylized form (*Princess X*, 1916). In reducing the original mass, Brancusi arrived at a curving, more axial design which, from a certain point of view, looked enough like a phallus to cause it to be rejected by the organizers of the Salon of 1920. If Brancusi had not made this piece, Chave would have had to invent it. It reads, she says, as "a female bust or a penis and scrotum, or both." The work's "polyvalency" suggests that the sculptor made "sexual changelings"; these lead to the "fantasy of a bi-gendered, hence a potentially self-reproducing body"; thence to a "fantasy of male primacy" and "the circumvention of the female in a dream of omnipotent self-regeneration." The end of this roller-coaster is in sight: "The figure of the self-creating (male) body serves . . . as a way of repressing the humbling fact that men are born of female bodies." Typically, it is Chave who represses the fact that Brancusi was of woman born—by not recording the date of his birth. Symbolically, he is not born at all in her book. Chave is proud of her pun, "Princess X/Prince's Sex," pointless by being in English. Brancusi's languages were French and Romanian; the pun is not possible in either.

Torso of a Young Man (wood, 1917–22) may be described as having a cylindrical torso twice as high as its diameter, supported below by two short cylinders, the thighs; it is sometimes mistaken for a female torso. My 1968 account of the work ends with the following words, quoted by Chave: "We observe, finally, that there are no genitals. *Torso of a Young Man* is itself a phallus, geometrical, rationalized, sublimated." Chave carries on: "The sense of alarm that might ordinarily be prompted by the young man's missing member is replaced, for Geist, by 'arousal' at his recognition that the entire work is a member, intact and rigid." Since I see no difference between "arousal" and arousal, this remark must be taken as a low blow. That "rigid" member is no more or less rigid than the curving phallus read into *Princess X*, than *The Prayer*, *The Kiss*—than all of Brancusi's work. As for "intact," Chave should look again. Finally, an example of the exhilarating new possibilities for writing feminist art histories: "The sculpture is whole, for the boy is not a girl. Rather, the girl is a boy, the vital, missing member having been surreptitiously supplied."

For all Chave's interest in what transpires in the crotch, it is only the male's that engages her. She completely disregards the contents of the female crotch, neglecting to reproduce *Mme. L. R.* (wood) and *Timidity* (stone), both of which show stylized female genitals. In the one case where she alludes to them, she gets the matter wrong: "The cleavage of *Eve*'s lips is loosely suggestive of female genitalia." How loose can you get?—they go the wrong way. Also among the missing are the two versions of *Penguins* (marble) and a number of other works, apparently because no feminist capital could be made of them. There is not one of Brancusi's many beautiful figure, head, and portrait drawings of women in several mediums. A *Bird in Space*, on pages 132 and 200, and *The Newborn*, plate 5, are misidentified. The measurements of the sculptures are not given. Misspelled are the names of a very famous (male) sculptor and a very famous book by an equally famous (male) author.

Chave describes *Prometheus* as "this seemingly infantile ball of a head" and notes the "egglike form of the work." This quick switch is the more surprising since Brancusi is often credited with having made more acute our consciousness of form. But Chave, in her deconstructive mission, is dedicated to a blurring of forms. Thus, she can state that "the egg is the most pervasive of his

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forms," although Brancusi never carved an egg, a shape quite different from any he made. Yet the term *egg*, alone and in combination, appears over one hundred times in the first eight textual pages of Chave's long Chapter Four: "Fables of Creation: The Cosmogonic Egg." We have already encountered the endlessly repeated characterizations of *The Sleeping Muse* as "egglike" and "a severed head." The motif of a resting severed head does exist in art history, in two versions: they refer to the decapitation of Orpheus and of John the Baptist. To attach the term to Brancusi's sculpture is a misuse of language only too frequent in this study.

It would be possible to write an article on Chave's word-by-word distortion of the matter of *The Sleeping Muse*. I choose instead to address a single aspect of that process, one repeated throughout *Constantin Brancusi*. Of *The Sleeping Muse*, for which Baroness Renée Frachon, a friend of the sculptor's, had been the model, Chave writes: "the Muse's eyelids are closed. The title tells us, of course, that she is asleep, but she might as well be dead: the Muse has lost her neck, after all, even as the baroness has lost her identity, and is on the verge of losing her face." Eventually, "the baroness . . . ended in a state of utter erasure, as a faceless egg." But "she" is neither asleep nor dead. "She" is an *it*, a sculpture, a metaphorical object. The reader is by now aware of Chave's constant mistaking of the sculpture of human subjects for the subjects themselves. This delusional proclivity, a secular counterpart of idolatry, surely accounts for the vehemence of her expression, and is otherwise lamentable in a practicing critic of art. Chave turns the process on its head in averting to the baroness, who, while the sculptor made his versions of the Muse motif, never lost either her identity or her face—or her place in Brancusi's affections. He gave her a cast of *The Sleeping Muse*; they were friends as long as he lived.

All is not lost! After a long pursuit of the multiple meanings of the *Maiastra*, the Firebird, the Phoenix, and their chimerical relation to each other and to *Bird in Space*, and in the course of a reading, indebted not a little to a 1981 article of mine, of *Bird in Space* as symbolically incorporating both the male and the female genitalia, Chave comes to the conclusion that this sculpture "need not be read" as the Phoenix: it can also be seen as "a utopian image of sexual union," of "dual sexuality, full and replete, of love and liberation through union or reunion," an image that "left his viewers in a vertiginous position: peering at the terrifying or exhilarating symbolic possibility of a non- or a dual-sexual identity." This euphoria, stated with characteristic excess, seems to be about something other than sculpture. Its enthusiasm, however, is unique in a work whose preface announced the author's "deep pleasures derived from Brancusi's searching, seductive, and hopeful art," a declaration belied by the unremitting morbidity and mordancy of her discussion.

Chave links the polishing of bronze to masturbation. I link it, in Brancusi's case, to alchemy, to magic.

A *Sleeping Muse* in polished bronze was shown at the Kent Gallery in 1987; it was breathtakingly beautiful, a work in which metal and form were magically merged in an enthralling image of feminine beauty, suspended in a fluid, golden medium. For the first time in years of studying Brancusi, my admiration was tinged by covetousness.

In 1979, a *Fish* in polished bronze was stolen from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and melted down in the belief that it was gold.

In 1974, a *Blond Negress* in polished bronze was put up for auction at Parke-Bernet. Seventy seconds later (by my wristwatch) the hammer descended, and the winning bid of $750,000, a record at the time, was announced. A man in the audience called out, "Is it made of gold?"

This is fairy gold, boy, and 'twill prove so.

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Poems
by Charles Tomlinson & F. D. Reeve

For Noriko

Seeing the blossoms on our cherry tree,
I thought of the strokes of your calligraphy
Riding on the air that was the page
Your brush was hovering over: stage by stage
A sudden blossoming of each character,
Of living letters, sprung from nowhere,
As though the sheet were both the bough and air.
If, in all this, your writing seemed a tree
Putting forth petals, what of your artistry,
How many centuries flowing through that arm?
One might have sworn each rapid touch was warm
With the life that was in you and others;
The brushwork at an end, the text still stirs
In this undecided light, this hesitating
English winter half-arrived at spring.

—*Charles Tomlinson*

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Shorelines

Here where the certainty of land begins,
The ocean writes and rewrites its margins:
You can read along the rippling of the sand
The script advancing in its cursive hand,
Denying it has ever signed before
The dozen dishonoured treaties of this shore—
The harbours' disappearing into silt,
Alexandra's cottage—royal Edward's guilt
Cost her less smart there—level with the tide.
To the hopes of merchant or of monarch's bride
The ocean does not deal long satisfactions,
Deep in its own ungovernable transactions.
White on this inland table lies a shell.
Lift it towards your ear and listen well.
The approaching breath of ocean that you hear
Says that the world won't end in ice or fire,
But lost to the tidal trickeries of water.

—*Charles Tomlinson*

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A dithyrambic

Horace, Odes III, XXV

Bacchus, where are you carrying me to
So spirited, so full of you?—
Driven to what woods, recesses,
My new-born vision scarcely guesses.
What echoing ravine will hear
My words enrolling star-god Caesar
In the heavenly senate? I shall sing
Some vigorous, unattempted thing,
Just like the Maenad who wakes up
Having blindly reached the mountain-top,
And wonders at the spread of space—
Dark River Hebrus, snow-clad Thrace,
The range that marks the Balkan frontier.
At rockscapes, woodland I, too, stare,
Grow dionysiac just like her.
Lord of the Naiads and Bacchantes
Who with bare hands uproot the trees,
Nothing little, low or mortal
Shall I sing now: I stand or fall
Bacchus, beside the god who twines
His temples with the verdant vines.

—*Charles Tomlinson*

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The village graveyard

The fallen leaves are red and dry.
Autumn burns. The still lake mirrors
a blue October sky.
In the cemetery the forgiven and unforgiven
lie side by side.

Hoarfrost on the goldenrod.
On the northern mountains new-fallen snow.
Time like a kindly god
reserves some open spaces in each row
for the living dead.

How long do we have who follow the sky?
Beneath the rustling maple leaves
in a green plot eleven by five
these ashy bones compact our fond belief
that the sun won't die.

—F. D. Reeve

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Art

Serendipity in Milan: "Drawing in Our Century"

by Karen Wilkin

On a working trip to Milan this spring, I kept seeing banners that proclaimed an exhibition of twentieth-century drawing: "Il Disegno del Nostro Secolo." The elegant graphics of the title were imposed on an impressive list of names: Balla, Beckmann, Boccioni, Chagall, de Chirico, Feininger, Giacometti, Gorky, Kandinsky, Kirchner, Klee, Léger, Matisse, Miró, Modigliani, Morandi, Picasso, Schiele, and more. The name of the institution—the Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta—meant nothing to me, but I was curious enough to make a mental note to see the show if I had time. Besides, it was Morandi that had brought me to Milan in the first place.

What made the visit inevitable was discovering that the Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta was open late, long after the places where I was doing research had closed. As the Michelin Guides say, it was worth the detour—not that it was much of a detour, since the foundation turned out to be conveniently located between the Castello Sforzesco, where Michelangelo's poignant work in progress, the Rondanini Pieta, is housed, and the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, home base for the company of the brilliant director Giorgio Strehler. The exhibition space itself is new, inaugurated with "Il Disegno del Nostro Secolo" only a few months before my visit, in March of this year. The foundation, established by the publisher Gabriele Mazzotta and named in honor of his father, has existed since 1988, collecting art and "working closely with major European museums," which seems to mean lending works to exhibitions and possibly helping to organize them. So far, the collection is dedicated to "original works on paper" by artists from Goya to Warhol, as well as by "numerous living artists"; "other collections are in the process of being formed," the press release says, ambiguously. The setting is splendid: a bombastic nineteenth-century palazzo, once used as a textile factory, now transformed into a state-of-the-art, beautifully lit exhibition space. There are three levels of elegant galleries, some surmounted by a spectacular industrial skylight, others punctuated by slender SoHo-type columns. Each gallery is apparently adaptable to the specific needs of each exhibition, and word is that the backstage space is just as good and just as up-to-date technologically.

If it goes on the way it has begun, the Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta may prove to be one of the best little museums anywhere. It already fills a significant gap in the Milanese scene. The Galleria d'Arte Moderna, an important collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European art with an outstanding group of Medardo Rosso sculptures, is closed for restoration, date of reopening unspecified. That's admirable and necessary, given the conditions in the eighteenth-century villa where it is housed, but it means that one of the few serious collections of modern art in Italy is, for all

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practical purposes, indefinitely inaccessible. Milan's civic collection of contemporary art—CIMAC—is devoted almost exclusively to Italian artists. (A couple of excellent Klees, a surprisingly good Nice-period Matisse, and two fine Braques—one Fauvist, the other a 1913 collage—are among the exceptions.) Installed in a rabbit-warren of little rooms, down a hard-to-find corridor, up a slow elevator, in a palazzo on the Piazza del Duomo, the collection is little publicized and little visited. During all the hours I spent making notes on CIMAC's many Morandis, mostly bequests from two important private collections, only a handful of visitors wandered rather forlornly through the place, some obviously waiting out a rainstorm. A French couple moved through at high speed, stopping only when they found the Braques and a small, not very inspired, Picasso—something they recognized, at last!

The Fondazione, by contrast, was crowded, even at the beginning of the apéritif hour, with Milanese. It is further set apart not only by its visible ambitions for the high quality and seriousness of what it exhibits—concerns apparently less urgent for many of Milan's commercial galleries—but also by its international scope. The shows planned for next fall and spring are, respectively, the remarkable cycle of theater murals and related works by Chagall seen at the Guggenheim SoHo last year, and a survey of the Bauhaus, from 1919 to 1933, drawn from the collections of the Bauhaus-Archiv in Berlin, various Weimar and Dessau sources, and "important European and American museums."

What about "Drawing in Our Century"? It aimed high and generally reached its mark, bringing together a broad spectrum of important artists and representing each with a kind of miniature retrospective. In many respects, it was a perfectly predictable demonstration of European (especially Italian) taste, but it also held many surprises. What was predictable for the most part was the list of artists included and excluded, and the weight accorded to particular approaches. What was less expected—and extremely pleasurable—was the sheer excellence of particular works, an impressive number of them drawn from the foundation's own collection. (An equally impressive number of outstanding works came from private collections in Italy—especially Milan—and in Germany.)

Not surprisingly, the Italian drawings were among the strongest in the show. Boccioni, for example, was represented by a group of muscular Futurist watercolors, and by some of his most apparently "abstract" drawings, the ink studies for "*stati d'anima*"—moods; of course, there were also a fair number of his early, utterly conventional life drawings. De Chirico, represented in depth, came off unusually well, particularly in his Metaphysical drawings of the 'Teens, the heart of the selection. In the best of these, his extraordinary facility contributes to their impact instead of getting in the way of direct expressiveness, as so often happens in his later work. Not a few of the Metaphysical drawings in the show were achingly delicate and unexpectedly evocative, particularly a fragile pencil drawing of 1917, *Autumnal Geometry* (private collection), with its overlapping *squadri*—those triangular drafting guides beloved of the Metaphysical painters—and two images of pears, one intact and one sliced longitudinally.

The Morandis tended toward the finished and naturalistic, with some notable exceptions: an angular "Fauvist" *Bather* (1918), from the Fondazione's own collection, admittedly more interesting for demonstrating Morandi's awareness of French vanguard painting than for its inherent merits, and a hard, crisp still life of 1944, from a Milanese private collection. The latter, a deceptively simple but seductive "signature image"—a pile of caffe latte bowls rhymed with a little ribbed sphere because of their common fluted sides—somehow managed to explore the specific texture and whiteness of kitchen china, while remaining unequivocally about pencil line and smudged tone. The standout of the group was a 1962 landscape, also

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from the foundation's collection, that gave us the essence of Morandi's native Emilia-Romagna, paring down austere hills and fields to a handful of tremulous but authoritative strokes.

Good as the Italian drawings in the show were, many of the non-Italians were equally well served. The Légers, ranging from the piled-up, shaded cylinders of the Cubist period to the stylized, massive figures of his later years, showed the full range and the real heights of the artist's achievement. The Cubist drawings, coincidentally, not only revealed how much the Futurists learned from their French colleagues but quite simply blew the great majority of the Futurist drawings in the show out of the water. An important early Cubist Picasso, a mask-like head of the *Demoiselles d'Avignon* type, *Nez quart de Brie* (Klaus Hegewisch Collection, Hamburg), set a level not equalled by most of the other Picassos in the exhibition, and there were many. A very complete overview of the Protean artist's career was afforded by Minotaurs, artist's studios, nudes, portraits, corridas, and the like, mostly from Italian collections.

Drawings by Northern artists were often amazingly good—and often from Italian collections as well. The Klees were individually ravishing and collectively representative of the breadth of his range. The George Grosz works, mostly from the foundation's own collection, skewered everyone from Mussolini to art critics, from capitalists to the bourgeoisie, with incisive line and staccato planes. The Feiningers, less mannered and more full-blown in color than those most commonly seen here in the States—those elegant cityscapes made by "printing" with the edge of an ink-dipped card—were among the best things in the show. A 1918 watercolor, *Sun—Sunset in the Village* (private collection, Trento), floated *two* suns, one brilliant orange, overlapped by its luminous purple counterpart, above a ramshackle cluster of intensely blue houses and angled paths. Vigorous and radiant, the little watercolor leaped off the wall, despite the intensity and excellence of its companions. Dix and Kirchner were also well represented, but the Beckmanns fell short, except for a pair of watercolors from the late Thirties, particularly *Two Girls Reading* (1938–39, private collection), whose compressed space and tightly overlapped figures, bodies congruent, heads barely separated, approximated the airless, crowded "stages" of some of his best known—and best—canvases. Generally, however, the drawings in the show lacked the incisiveness of Beckmann's paintings. He's better than that.

The biggest disappointment in the exhibition, however, were the Matisses, B-level drawings at best, in the context of what he was capable of. (For anyone else, they would have been perfectly admirable.) Of course, Europeans have never responded to Matisse as quickly, as passionately, or as loyally as Americans have—or, for a brief period, as Russians did. It's no accident that the greatest collections of his work are in the U.S. and Russia; that the Beaubourg has the important collection that it now boasts is a recent phenomenon, one that owes a great deal more to the provisions of French inheritance-tax laws than to the prescience of French collectors. The inadequacy of the exhibition's Matisses ultimately told you more about the peculiarities of European, and particularly Italian, taste than it did about the artist himself—something that could be said of the entire show.

Part of the fascination of "Il Disegno del Nostro Secolo," in fact, beyond even the pleasure of individual, often extremely good works, was what it revealed about the differences between European and American perceptions of the course of modernism. The deference accorded to Surrealism, for example, was an unmistakable indicator of the Old World viewpoint of the show's organizers. Not that this was surprising. Even in today's world of instant communications and blurred distinctions between even widely separated places, the gulf between American and European notions of the significance of the Surrealist movement re-

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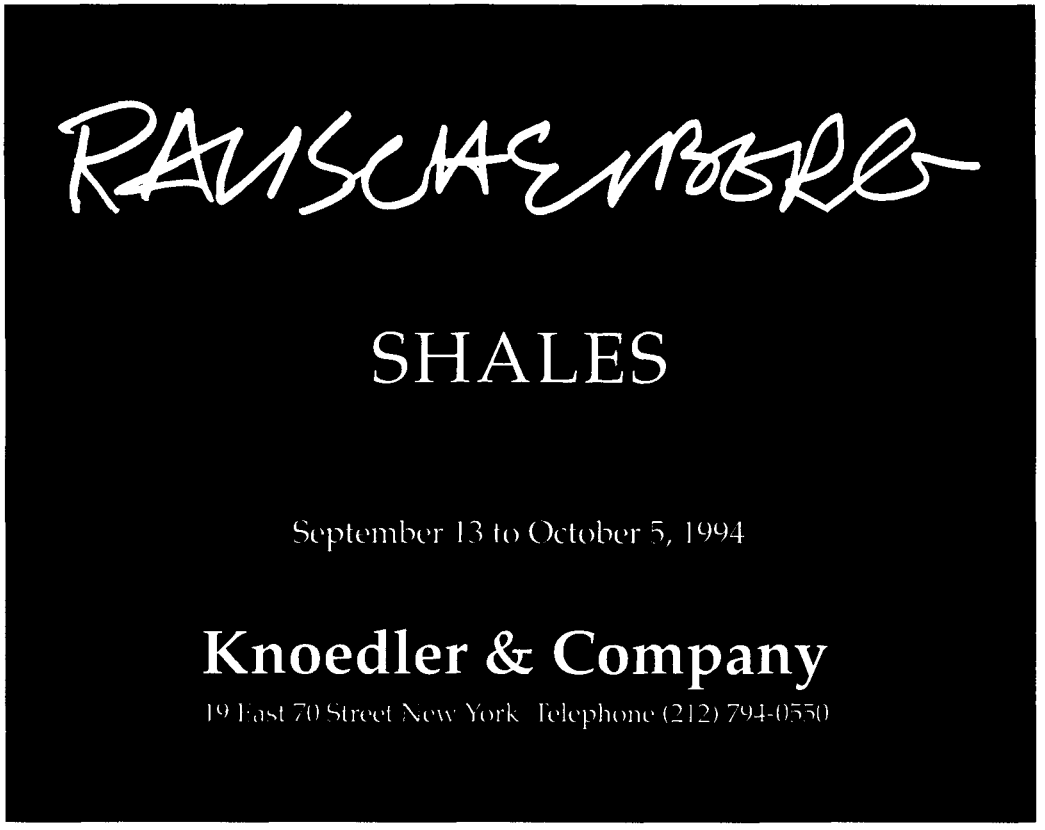

mains vast. Most of us on this side of the Atlantic acknowledge the importance and persistence of Surrealist ideas about tapping the unconscious as the source of creativity, just as we do the importance and persistence of Cubist ideas about space, but we do so almost automatically: they are an inherited part of our cultural baggage. Surrealism itself, as a codified approach, belongs to the past, just as Cubism does. American postwar abstraction had a large component of Surrealist assumptions—a belief in the necessity of revealing interior imagery and personal obsessions, rather than responding to something seen—but the look of "orthodox" Surrealist painting—Dalí's "hand-painted postcards" of the unconscious—was never as influential as the movement's abstract manifestations—Miró's highly charged biomorphism for painters or Giacometti's spooky insect forms for sculptors. Europeans, by contrast, not only have been extremely attracted to the appearance of "illusionistic" Surrealism, but have never ceased to regard it as a fertile, vital way of thinking and working, perhaps as the *most* vital way of thinking and working. "Il Disegno del Nostro Secolo" certainly reflected this.

To my American taste, the sheer quantity of works by Ernst, Tanguy, Magritte, Masson, Dalí, Wols, Bellmer, and their fellows was excessive and not justified by the quality of the work. The cumulative effect of the Surrealist section of the show, in fact, was of a selection less rigorous than that of the rest of the exhibition. The Giacometti drawings were extremely weak, and the Mirós—with, oddly, nothing earlier than 1930—were extremely disappointing. Yet the weight given to Surrealist affiliations was obviously what prompted the inclusion of the show's only two American artists, Man Ray, a card-carrying member of the movement, and Arshile Gorky, unique among the Abstract Expressionists for being "recognized" by the European "artists in exile"—largely Surrealists and Surrealist-sympathizers—in New York during the 1940s. The Gorkys in the show, mostly evanescent pencil dreamscapes enhanced with colored pencil, were as good as

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this master-draftsman gets, their painfully delicate lines and spontaneous streaks of tone setting a standard of how the raw materials of works on paper can be pushed to the outer limits of expressiveness and tension. Coming upon them, after what seemed like an endless run of characteristic (but, to my eye, totally dispiriting) Massons, Tanguys, and the rest, was a moment of pure delight: it afforded a rush of renewed energy and sharpened attention toward the end of a long period of concentrated looking. It was obvious, however, that Gorky had gotten in on the Surrealist ticket and not because of the potency, beauty, or accomplishment of his drawings. If accomplishment, rather than allegiance, had been the issue, then other outstanding American draftsmen might have been included. Guston, Diebenkorn, perhaps David Smith are among the obvious choices, artists whose presence might have offered far more to the message of the show than that of, say, Man Ray. And what about John Graham, Gorky's close friend and colleague, whose fascination with the surreal and the mystical led him to repudiate the modernism he once espoused?

De Kooning, of course, could have been selected for both superlative drawing and Surrealist links, but he is, technically speaking, still alive. "Drawing in Our Century" bore the subtitle "Part 1: Klimt to Wols"; the thirty-seven artists and 255 works in the exhibition were intended to encapsulate only the first fifty years of this century. Presumably a survey of the second half, including living artists, will be next. I am eager to see that show.

"Il Disegno del Nostro Secolo" was accompanied by a massive catalogue—436 pages—with illustrations of the exhibited works, and with essays (in Italian, English, French, and German) by Gabriele Mazzotta, Vittorio Fagone, Jean-Jacques Lebel, and Ewald Rathke, as well as individual entries and biographies of the artists. It's published, of course, by Mazzotta. It's a fairly daunting document, but an excellent record of a provocative show.

Exhibition notes

"Dalí: The Early Years"
at the Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York. June 29–September 18, 1994

Few reputations in twentieth-century art have soured more than that of the Surrealist painter Salvador Dalí (1904–1989). The image of Dalí as a flamboyant huckster with a knack for publicity has all but supplanted his accomplishments as an artist. "Dalí: The Early Years" seeks to rectify this situation, albeit in a roundabout manner. As organized by Ana Beristain, the exhibition focuses on the artist's work prior to 1931, the year of his signature painting *The Persistence of Memory*. It portrays Dalí as a serious student of early modernism and, in doing so, attempts to free him from the taint of (as the introductory wall label would have it) "commercial pandering." This may be easier said than done. At the museum gift shop, gallery goers can purchase a working "Softwatch Clock" for $169. Presumably, these are offered in the spirit of Dalí the modern master and not Dalí the Surrealist shill.

"Dalí: The Early Years" begins in 1916, when the twelve-year-old Salvador declared himself, not without a modicum of chutzpah, an Impressionist. The paintings and drawings of his youth evince a modest talent, but they are primarily of documentary interest. *Portrait of My Father* (1920), for instance, may provide grist for Dalí biographers, but it is still a clumsy painting. Dalí's greatest talent may have been his sponge-like ability to assimilate influences: de Chirico, Morandi, Tanguy, Miró, and Picasso can all be traced throughout the early work. What he made of these influences is another matter. Certainly, the less said about his Cubist paintings of the mid-1920s the better. That Dalí labeled these works "academic Cubist" gives some indication that even this most convinced of egotists was capable of critical lucidity.

While making his forays into Cubism, Dalí also pursued a neo-classical realism. His realist paintings are the most straight-

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forward in the *oeuvre*, unencumbered by contrivance or Surrealist hokum. In them, one feels Dalí's admiration for Vermeer, whom he considered "the greatest painter who has ever been." (The exhibition tips its hat toward the Dutch master—and steps outside of its time frame—by showing Dalí's 1954 copy of *The Lacemaker*.) Dalí's limitations as a draftsman are evident here, and his painting is often dry and flinty. But *Basket of Bread* (1926), *Seated Girl Seen from the Back* (1925), and, especially, *Girl's Back* (1926) have an otherworldly, one might say *surreal*, clarity about them that the well-known work can't match. Indeed, devotees of Dalí the Surrealist are likely to be a bit bored by his neo-classical paintings, devoid, as they are, of theatricality and *putrefact*. Nevertheless, they are the pinnacle of his achievement.

The final gallery of the exhibition features Dalí's trademark Surrealist paintings of the Twenties and Thirties. After the mish-mash of the early work, the familiarity of a painting like *The Accommodations of Desires* (1929) comes as something of a relief. Yet despite the skill with which his fantastic images are given convincing reality, Dalí's realities never make for convincing paintings. Consequently, the willed eccentricity of his brand of Surrealism—was it Freud who claimed that Dalí's conscious mind was of greater interest than his unconscious mind? —ends up being as dull and predictable as the surfaces of his paintings. His work tells us more about the half-life of public outrage than it does about the nature of art. Despite the efforts of its curator, "Dalí: The Early Years" is unlikely to thwart the downward spiral of his status as an artist. Dalí remains a curiosity in the history of modern art. In the history of celebrity, of course, he is something more.

"Dalí: The Early Years" originated at the Hayward Gallery, London (March 3–May 30, 1994), and will travel to the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (October 14, 1994–January 16, 1995), and the Palau Robert, Barcelona (February–April 1995). A catalogue of the exhibition has been published by Thames & Hudson and the

IN MEMORIAM

Bruno Fonseca

[1958–1994]

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries

NEW YORK

An Index to
The New Criterion,
volumes 1–10,
September 1982–June 1992,
is available from
the Office Manager.

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South Bank Centre, London (248 pages, $50; $29.95 paper).

—*Mario Naves*

"Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties"
at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.
June 16–September 11, 1994

More and more, artists today encompass less and less. The sum of their concerns amounts to little more than the banal, the trivial, and the puerile, as the works they produce speak of imaginative horizons shrunken to pinpoint size.

The latest example of this trend is "Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties," now on view at MOMA. The object of the exhibition, which features work by seven artists—Polly Apfelbaum, Mona Hatoum, Rachel Lachowicz, Jac Leirner, Claudia Matzko, Rachel Whiteread, and Andrea Zittel—is to show how Minimalism's vocabulary of the grid, repetitive forms, and geometric structure has been annexed to the expression of feminist ideas.

The first thing to note about the show is how appallingly jejune and numbingly boring its contents are: rows of museum shopping bags; a "color chart" made from eyeshadow containers; wire-mesh lockers arranged around a bare light bulb; six suspended bird cages covered in lipstick; the plaster cast of a room; stained material on the floor. Minimalist, to be sure: little ideas, taken nowhere.

Lynn Zelevansky, the show's curator, would not agree with this assessment, but then her views are suspect. Like virtually every rising museum person these days (she is a curatorial assistant in MOMA's Department of Painting and Sculpture), she's caught up in an ideological interpretation of art and speaks an unintelligible academic jargon, in her case the jargon of the feminist semiotician. This effectively cripples her when it comes to any sort of cogent analysis of the works in the show, but it doesn't prevent her from making some lavish claims. She tells us, for example, that Polly Apfelbaum's *Fine Flowers in the Valley*, a scatterpiece of dye-splotched material, "resonates" with references to the following: Jackson Pollock, Helen Frankenthaler, Carl Andre, William Wordsworth, Italo Calvino . . . So much for the burden of the past.

Actually, Ms. Zelevansky has missed the point of all the works she has assembled, a point having nothing to with Minimalism per se. Minimalism was about absolutes, structure, modes of aesthetic organization. This is about something else entirely. Minimalist aesthetics isn't integral to anything in "Sense and Sensibility"; it hangs limply over the surface of the exhibition like a gossamer shift.

In her catalogue essay, Ms. Zelevansky cites Eva Hesse as an important precursor of these artists, but her more relevant example is the photographer Eleanor Antin, whose *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture* (1972), a series of 144 nude self-portraits, documents the artist's ten-pound weight loss over thirty-six days. If the artists in "Sense and Sensibility" have links to any recent tradition, it is to the solipsistic, narcissistic artists of the 1960s and 1970s—Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, and others—whose art was almost entirely about their own bodies and processes. Like these older artists, the artists in "Sense and Sensibility" believe that we're as interested as they are in these matters. They have their sights fixed firmly on their own navels, and are closing in at warp speed.

—*Eric Gibson*

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Theater

West End story

by Mark Steyn

"Are Americans Taking Over Our Theatre?" roared the front page of the London *Evening Standard*. While Broadway prepares to rouse itself from its summer torpor, the West End bounces along with a Lillian Hellman revival, a David Mamet revival, a David Mamet world première, a new Arthur Miller, an old Tennessee Williams, a (sort of) new Tennessee Williams. Over-praised, over-staged, and over here? Maybe. The British critic Christopher Bigsby compares it with TV and movies—"our cinemas are dominated by *The Flintstones*"—but without noting that Hollywood's cultural colonialism stems from its strength at home. Mamet and Miller and company are in London for precisely the opposite reason, which is why everywhere you turn they're sweet-talking the natives: Gregory Mosher, in town to direct Mamet's *The Cryptogram*, says that he can't think of any young American writers; Miller, a not so young American writer, repeats his glib line about London still having plays whereas New York has only shows.

These are familiar complaints, but Londoners love to hear them. Indeed, Frank Rich's fame here derives from every visiting American theater practitioner's obligatory whinge about him—a unique negative celebrity triumphantly confirmed by the opening of *Sunset Boulevard* last year, when the gossip columns included him with the soap colossi and the TV weather girls as one of the "stars" expected to attend. Just before curtain up, I was sharing a joke, as the columnists say, with Don Black (*Sunset*'s lyricist) and David Frost when Mr. and Mrs. Rich swept down the aisle scattering meteorological bimbos before them. It was the coronation scene from *Prisoner of Zenda*: if you'd looked deep in his eyes, you'd know it was phony, but he got away with it. So, these days, when New York showfolk breeze in, every British journalist likes to show off his knowledge: "I suppose Frank Rich is part of the problem, too, eh?" "Um, well, it's some other fellow now, you know . . ."

To extend the monarchical analogy, the difference between New York and London is, in British Parliamentary terms, the difference between the dignified and the efficient parts of the constitution. New York has all the ceremonial, all the myths which so seduce the British: the headaches, the heartaches, the backaches, the flops, there's no business like, the hip-hooray and ballyhoo, the lullaby of Broadway, *Variety*, Sardi's, try-outs, re-writes, play doctors . . . But it's strictly pomp and circumstance: the Tony Awards ceremony is better than the Olivier Awards ceremony, but only because it's a ceremony. London now does most of the work: not just the Wildes and Shaws; not just Thomas Southerne's *The Wife's Excuse*, a flopperoo in 1691 which went unperformed until the RSC's superb revival this summer; but even Charles MacArthur's *Johnny on a Spot*, a political satire which sank on Broadway in 1942 but which the National's

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Richard Eyre dusted off because he felt it had something to say about Whitewater. He was wrong, but you appreciate the opportunity to judge. These days, one-third of the National's repertoire is American, whether revivals or new plays (*Angels in America* opened here first). As Gregory Mosher puts it, "Your National Theater has turned into our National Theater because we don't have one."

It's a simple argument, but that's something theater people are prone to. To Mosher, Britons respect words, Americans demand spectacle. Oh yes? And who are the spectacle purveyors par excellence? In any one week, 30 percent of working American stage actors are employed in Andrew Lloyd Webber/Cameron Mackintosh productions. Listen to Arthur Miller's weary plays-*vs.*-shows arguments, and you understand the smug wrong-headedness of his later work. Is a man who sees the form he's worked in all his life in such grotesque cartoon terms likely to have much to tell us about Bosnia?

It's because London has shows that it still has plays. In that sense, the most disturbing trend here is exemplified by this year's Tony winners, *An Inspector Calls* and *Carousel*, both National Theatre productions. Stage by stage, the subsidized companies have annexed more and more of the West End showman's turf: if J. B. Priestley and Rodgers and Hammerstein are no longer the property of "commercial theater," what's left? Subsidy is a two-edged sword. If you don't do enough theater, you lose the knack (as happened to French musicals after Offenbach: Paris is virtually the only town where *Les Miz* hasn't been a hit and where Cameron Mackintosh ended up closing down the office). But too much subsidy, and you wind up like most European countries —over-funded classics, no new plays, a fake democracy where everyone's paid the same: such a system has so little appeal to anyone with any sense of their own worth that it fatally restricts the pool of talent you can draw on. London's balancing act is illustrated by the now standard career trajectory of hotshot stagers: plenty of classics at directors' clubs like the RSC and the National, a few operas here and there, then a major Mackintosh musical. First, it was Trevor Nunn (*Cats*); then, Nicholas Hytner (*Miss Saigon*); now, Sam Mendes, who staged the summer revival of *Glengarry Glen Ross* at the Donmar Warehouse before starting work on the new Mackintosh production of *Oliver!* at the Palladium. The special-pleading subsidy junkies and the elephantine spectacle peddlers—the "plays" and the "shows"—are the same guys. Compare their résumés with, say, America's most bankable director (and that doesn't bear too close inspection), Tommy Tune.

Between the savage indictments of contemporary Britain and the commercial juggernauts comes the best indicator of theatrical health, the ham-fisted hokum which lights up the West End night after night. London is a great town if you like old pop stars whose twin-props come down in the mountains. *Buddy* is standard bio-tuner fare: the good guys wear blue jeans, the bad guys wear suits and Buddy tells them, "I gotta play mah music mah way"; other than that, he led a boring life and then his plane crashed. When it opened in 1989, *Buddy* attracted an audience so unaccustomed to legitimate theater that many of them, unfamiliar with the concept of intermission, left at the end of Act I assuming the play was over. Last month, *Buddy* announced a new box-office period: they're now booking to the year 2000. Hoping to tap into the same success is *Patsy Cline*, the story of another American singer who never lived long enough to redeem her frequent-flyer miles but who, otherwise, was even duller than Buddy Holly—at least as played by the sweet Irish colleen for whom this vehicle was created.

These shows wouldn't run ten minutes on Broadway (*Buddy*, foolishly, tried), any more than would *Hot Shoe Shuffle* (Australian tap), *Barry Manilow's Copacabana* (the tacky musical of the hit single), *An Evening with Gary Linklater* (an English footballer), *Anorak of Fire* (train spotters), *Sweet Loraine*

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(old songs plus an "Oprah" parody), or *Thunderbirds Are Go* (grown-ups pretending to be children's puppets). But they help sustain the West End and prevent it petering out into those twin dead-end streets of the endangered species (serious plays) and the big event (the mega-musicals).

There are no London equivalents of the Belasco and the Nederlander—big houses that have been dark for as long as anyone can remember. In the West End, when *City of Angels* or Nicol Williamson's one-man Barrymore show folds, you can always find something to fill the gap. Stoll Moss (a sort of combination Shubert/Nederlander operation) recently gave in to public pressure to rename the Globe after John Gielgud, arranging the gala re-opening to coincide with a new production of *Hamlet*. Unfortunately (as I write), due to a booking logjam, it looks as if the new Gielgud Theatre will be inaugurated by a Roy Orbison revue. I hope Sir John enjoys it.

Never mind the quality, feel the breadth. *Patsy Cline* and Gregory Mosher come to London for the same reason: you can get the piece up on stage. In New York, it now takes longer to complete the necessary legal work on a small off-Broadway play than it did seventy years ago to write and mount a full Broadway musical. Even the first-night notices take longer—the critics insisting that they see the plays at previews in order to have more time to hone their aperçus, the producers glad not to have 'em around for the opening, even though their absence reduces a first night to a stilted ritual. In London, whether at Mamet or Manilow, the curtain drops and the critics charge up the aisle to start barking into telephones: theater on the hoof, as it should be. Theater exists in the present tense: if it isn't on stage, it isn't happening. Across the Atlantic, all is ponderous and drawn-out: over-workshopped, over-fixed, over-previewed, the Broadway creative process works for musical-comedy retreads like *Crazy for You* and the biennial Neil Simon but for very little else. And, to invert Shakespeare, a stage is *all* the world—or it's nothing. Watch the Tonys on CBS and you're struck by the homogeneity. Watch the West End's Olivier Awards and it's an incoherent hotchpotch: a sulky RSC director dressed like Richard III flounces on and denounces the Tory government, then a Jerry Lee Lewis impersonator sings "Great Balls of Fire."

There's nothing like night after night in un-air-conditioned theaters in a 90-degree London heatwave to make you wonder whether we need *quite* so much theater. Appropriately, from Naomi Wallace's *In the Heart of America* to the National's revival of *Sweet Bird of Youth*, this summer's Americana has tended toward the South, and for once sweltering audiences can join in all the fanning and dabbing and collar-loosening as they wonder why so many American playwrights have come to depend on the kindness of strangers.

900 Oneonta (the title's a street address) is every Southern Gothic cliché served up in one bravura demented stew: booze, bigotry, rape, madness, disease, incest, rumbling thunder, and an old patriarch called Dandy which, in a lazy Southern drawl, comes out even closer to Big Daddy. As one character helpfully explains, "I am America." To underline the point, Dandy rages about how the goddamn baby boomers have had everything handed to them and they've gone soft and pissed it away. Just in case you still don't get it, all his heirs are nuts or barren or riddled with cancer. As a metaphor for the country, it's debatable; as a metaphor for the theater, it's not bad.

The author, David Beaird, is an American who made various forgettable movies in Hollywood, then got sick and decided he wanted to write one thing in his life he was really proud of. Nobody wanted to do it in America, so he raised the money himself and produced and directed it at the Lyric, Hammersmith. Two fellow-Americans, Frank and Woji Gero, founders of the West End Producers' Alliance, saw it, liked it, and decided to take it to the Old Vic—a London landmark now owned by Honest Ed Mirvish of Toronto, one of Her Majesty's loyalest

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Canadian subjects but, just for the record, also born in America. At the end of the play, one of the cast, another American, steps forward and explains that the West End Producers' Alliance is committed to new theatrical writing and cheap prices (from $8 to $21, with a top ticket on Mondays and Thursdays of $11), but they haven't got a big advertising budget so could we please all tell our friends. American-born theater owner, American producers, American playwright/director, American actors, but you have to go to Britain to see it.

In one London interview after another, Arthur Miller blames the decline of the American theater on "showbusiness." It's the easy distinction: scholarly Londoners steeped in the classics *vs.* philistine Broadway sharks. In fact, show*business* is one thing American theater is spectacularly bad at. Even the so-called "hits" are mostly bogus: Tommy Tune's *Will Rogers Follies* was a sell-out and ran for years, yet failed to get its money back; *City of Angels* did better but was so parochial it flopped on its road tour; *Crazy for You* played two years at capacity and, as soon as it recouped, its first-time producer announced that he'd decided to quit while he was ahead. In contrast, Cameron Mackintosh's *Cats* has made more money than the biggest-grossing Hollywood movies, as a result of which virtually every fringe venue of note, as well as the Producers' Alliance and the National Theatre revivals program (which gave us *Carousel*), comes with an almost ubiquitous back-of-the-book credit, "Supported by the Mackintosh Foundation." It never seems to occur to Miller that his heyday was also that of Broadway showbusiness, that his three best plays—*Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible*, *A View from the Bridge*—were all produced by that shrewd showman Kermit Bloomgarden. Miller prospered when Broadway prospered, and he has declined with it.

As he feels so strongly about Broadway's corruption, you wonder why he doesn't root one of his plays in the subject: at least he'd have a telling detail or two. All his recent work—*The Last Yankee*, *The Ride Down Mount Morgan*, and now *Broken Glass*—has brooded on national malaise but in increasingly slapdash plots and unconvincing environments. *Broken Glass* was supposed to have its première at the National, but schedules clashed and instead it became for Miller a rare return to Broadway, passing a few unhappy weeks at the Booth earlier this year. Everyone here is too polite to mention its rapid dispatch, and Miller himself seems relieved to be back with his favorite British director, David Thacker. We are in Brooklyn, 1938: Sylvia Gellberg has mysteriously lost the use of her legs, and her husband takes her to the doctor, who diagnoses hysterical paralysis. "I barely know my way around psychiatry," concedes Dr. Hyman ("a Socialist"), but he gamely offers to "give it a try." The brazenness is magnificent: the line excuses the author from research or expertise, and, intentionally or not, justifies his view of himself as the great have-a-go psychoanalyst of American anxieties. In his last few plays, Miller reminds me of a butch Miss Marple: moral inertia has descended on the village, the local constabulary's baffled, Miller pokes about a bit with his knitting needles, identifies the problem, and still gets home for tea.

These are "whatdunits" rather than "whodunits." For Sylvia, paralysis is her response to newspaper reports of Kristallnacht; her immobility, says Miller, is "an exact image for the paralysis we all showed then in the face of Hitler." Oh, and it's also due to her husband's subsuming his Jewish identity (though, oddly enough, not changing his name) in his pursuit of the American Dream. Where *900 Oneonta* likes its metaphors to have the neat precision of a synchronized swimming team, *Broken Glass* prefers to burden its characters with contradictions they can't bear. For one thing, Sylvia is in a state of terror and seems, therefore, a most inexact image of the American people's reaction to Hitler—or to the carnage in Bosnia, where, *pace* Roosevelt, the only thing we have to fear is complacency.

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Here, the complacency is all Miller's: there's no attempt to persuade or engage; he reminds us of the past and leaves us with the vague hope that things will be different this time around. I don't think that's a good enough reason to go to the theater.

Patronizing your audience is one thing; patronizing your characters is worse. It's never easy to make stupid, inarticulate people engaging on stage, though dramatists as various as Eugene O'Neill, George Abbott, and Oscar Hammerstein managed it. But *Broken Glass* has a false tinkle; its dialogue is clumsy and fake. Here's Miller's conjuring of time and place: "This Crosby's the one I like," Sylvia says to Dr. Hyman. "You ever hear of him?" Crosby? In '38? I resent the thudding obviousness of the reference, the ludicrous implausibility of the question, and I don't believe the ladylike Sylvia would have referred to "Crosby" by surname only: that's guys-drinkin'-Bud-round-the-jukebox talk. Conversely, I don't believe that in 1938 an educated Jew would open a conversation with another Jew with "I find this Adolf Hitler very disturbing." As opposed to Bing Hitler? And while we're at it, what's with all this "this" business? It happens every second or third line: clunk-clunkety-clunk.

By coincidence, a day or two after seeing *Broken Glass*, I came across a tape of the BBC's 1989 radio production of *The Crucible* with Richard Dreyfuss leading a starry cast. Here was language that resonated with truth and character, that motored the drama. "In Britain, they listen much, much, much more. They like language," says Gregory Mosher. But what if the language isn't worth listening to? Miller's championing of "plays" over "shows" would be more impressive if his play could stand the scrutiny. As for "shows," *Broken Glass* could learn a thing or two there, as well. David Thacker gives Miller a mournful cello obbligato. In theater, a mournful cello signals "serious play" as surely as, in television, a smoochy sax means an upmarket perfume ad. "Show," as Miller uses the term, is the business of hucksters and fairground barkers, but you could argue that it's about a more theatrical style of storytelling, one which film and TV can never capture, which uniquely requires live presence. The theme of *Broken Glass*—passivity in the face of great evil—led me back to *Cabaret*, when the emcee is dancing with the tutu-ed gorilla and singing "If You Could See Her Through My Eyes." The scene is funny, the tune is beguiling. "If you could see her through my eyes," he pleads, and then hisses the final line: "She wouldn't look Jewish at all." We laugh, we catch ourselves laughing in the mirrors over the stage, we realize what we're laughing at, and the song dies in shamed silence. Music, lyrics, plot point, choreography, design, and involuntary audience participation have fused to create an effective theatrical shorthand. A dramatist can have other tools than words.

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Dance

Explicit acts, sleazy gestures: the Joffrey Ballet's "Billboards"

by Laura Jacobs

Billboards, *a landmark full-length rock ballet, documents a remarkable collaboration between one of America's most acclaimed pop performers (Prince) and one of America's most respected dance companies (The Joffrey Ballet). It has been an outstanding critical success and has played to sell-out crowds across America.*
—Copy from *Billboards* video jacket

When I first started reviewing the Joffrey Ballet in the early 1980s, the company was touring its "Homage to Diaghilev" evening with Rudolf Nureyev. You could say it was a gimmick. Robert Joffrey knew he didn't have dancers who could pull off a first-rate *Rose Adagio* or who could perform Balanchine even as well as the Dance Theatre of Harlem did. But his troupe was game and so was he. He put the dancers in important old ballets and works that were elsewhere out of repertory, and with the Diaghilev program, he knew he had something bankable. The Ballets Russes mystique, with its heady stress on consummate collaboration, attracted art, music, and theater people as well as balletomanes—four audiences for the price of one (today it would be dubbed a "marketing strategy"). Nureyev was already past prime at this point in his career, but the star satyr of classical dance was a believable stand-in for Vaslav Nijinsky, even if physically and psychically they were different animals. When Nureyev performed the pelvic thrust that ends Nijinsky's *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, the unveiled orgasm that so shocked the world in 1912, it was still shocking—a long slow cold sexual squeeze, labored in the way Rudi liked to labor. Everything was up to date in Kansas City.

That Mallarmé's question, "Loved I a dream?", a conundrum at the heart of both the poem *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and the Symbolist movement in literature, might also figure as one of *the* philosophical queries of classical ballet, with its nether sexual dreaming, is a pretty coincidence. That Nijinsky could take so fragile a construction and connect it with that bestial climactic gesture was his peculiar genius. It is clear now that Nijinsky never reconciled the body's mass with the soul's soaring mathematics—for him, life was a kind of corporeal punishment, and the menace of blood and bone, the thumping need, cast a powerful spell over his handful of ballets and eventually over his mind. Nijinsky's madness remains a spectacular Rorschach blot on ballet's sweeter harmonies and celestial seeking after order; he stands dazed on the thorny path to modernism.

The Joffrey has kept *Faune* in repertory even without a star to perform the title role. And though the company performs the ballet less and less well, in its deep plastique and unblushing onanism *Faune* provides a kind of mooring, a cloven footnote. For the Joffrey is also the company that has made a specialty of "youth," or rather "rock," ballets. One thinks of Twyla Tharp's lust-dusted *Deuce Coupe*, Arpino's communal *Trinity*,

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Forsythe's priapic *Love Songs*, and Joffrey's own *Astarte*, works that set adolescent drives and Kumbaya desires to a rock-'n'-roll beat. It is an absurd stretch to cite *Faune* as the earliest rock ballet (though there are rocks in it!), but it does have hallmarks of that later species. First, Nijinsky's work gets pushy with classical technique (he flattens ballet's spheric modeling into the Attic stylization and sideways strip perspective of Greek urns). Second, it is hallucinatory, heated; sex hangs heavy in the air. Finally, if the faun were human it could only be a teenage boy in his heavy-metal lair upstairs.

Which brings us to *Billboards*, the Joffrey's latest rock ballet and moneymaker. The brainchild of Gerald Arpino, Robert Joffrey's partner through the years and since Joffrey's death the company's artistic director, *Billboards* was conceived as a survey of America, a full-length work in four parts that hits the road and takes in the looming billboards that mark our highways. A different choreographer has fashioned each section, none having prominence yet all using music from the recorded *oeuvre* of a single star: the pop icon Prince. Indeed, in the absence of a compelling ballet presence, Arpino has imported this battery of bad-boy energy to up the company wattage. Two years ago when the Joffrey lost its only A+ principal, Tina LeBlanc, to the San Francisco Ballet, you could feel the dancers' collective slump. Ballet companies must have truth and light at the top.

As those with just a glancing knowledge of pop music know, the light Prince brings to the Joffrey is a tad stormy—his most famous pop expression, "Purple Rain," was not only the panting anthem of the early Eighties, a gloamy *cri de coeur*, but the name of a tour that swept the country. His truth is the usual rock-'n'-roll truth—strobe-lit narcissism and hot pants—only hornier (with his flared nostrils and feathery sideburns, he's a springy little faun himself). Lord of the flyweights, Prince prowls the stage like mad royalty, a pup in platform shoes and Liberace lace. His name, which he recently changed to a symbol—he's now referred to as "the artist formerly known as Prince"—is a signet pressed into his own melting gazes.

He appears in *Billboards* on the soundtrack only, but a cheer goes up as the audience recognizes the opening bar of "Sometimes It Snows in April." Laura Dean, known for her spinning minimalism and affinity with Eastern mysticism, choreographs Billboard I. Punning on the word "snow," she begins with a reference to *La Bayadère* (a ballet set in India) and the unforgettable opening of its famous Act II, an opium dream subtitled "Kingdom of the Shades." Costumed in powder-white Lycra, dancers appear one by one à la Petipa, each repeating a three-step pattern within a lengthening line. A simple bit of infinity, it's a sensible choice for the song, with its druggy, balladeer lyrics.

But an allusion is not an idea, and Dean has nowhere to go with the dance. In an unkind turn of the pun, you could say that here she shows but a "shade" of her former rigor, those tight, steely, DNA strands of movement she championed in the early Eighties, when her *Night* was a solid success for the Joffrey, a scary spectacle of mass selflessness. Billboard I is a parody of early Dean, especially when, during the squealing disco songs "Trust" and "Baby I'm a Star," she makes do with hip-swinging and high kicks—*A Chorus Line* plays dominos. When she's in her Broadway mode, we forget that Dean ever was a dharma bum.

Charles Moulton, famous for his dances in which rows of people pass balls in drill-precision patterns, choreographed Billboard 2. Set to "Thunder" and "Purple Rain," this is where *Billboards* accelerates up the ramp to the cloverleaf where *Hair*, MTV, Bob Fosse, and "The Robin Byrd Show" get the urge to merge. Dressed like postmodern hippies, the dancers run amok, bullied by a female ringmaster on pointe who occasionally pokes a rugbeater high between their legs. We get the Joffrey as a troupe of rutting nasties, idiotically jumping one another's butts. Is that crude? But to describe it in technical terms would sound prudish, and that, ac-

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cording to *Billboards*' "true picture" of America, is something we no longer are. Still, the most dispiriting thing about Moulton's hump-happy free-for-all is not that it's so unpleasant, but that it just bounces around like a dropped ball, unconnected to anything. Especially ballet.

After Moulton's contribution, everything else is more of the same. Margo Sappington, noted for choreographing the nude pas de deux in *Oh, Calcutta!*, does Billboard 3. She brings that old Calcutta heat to a contemporary sex-club scene. Sappington isn't the first to do backrooms and brothels (Ulysses Dove did them two years ago at American Ballet Theater in *Serious Pleasures*). Nor is she the first to snitch the switchblade style patented by William Forsythe (Dove's done that too). But her tone is still one with "Thunder." When a chic ballerina turns her back to the audience and bends over, she reaches one hand round to cover her rear, a coy rebuke to Moulton's men (Prince, meanwhile, is singing "just like a dog, arf arf.")

In Billboard 4, Peter Pucci presents a grinding pas de deux in which the man lies on his back and the woman inserts the tip of her red toe shoe into his open mouth. Reverse fellatio? Silencing the oppressor? The one thing never before done in a ballet? Pucci's puzzler earns a nod in the annals of *non compos mentis*, but it's hardly beneath his peers. Their "billboards" brim with explicit acts and sleazy gestures, yet show nothing of how human creatures actually move or date or mate or dance in dance clubs. None makes as coherent a statement as Nijinsky did when the one fully dimensional event in his ballet was that superb spasm. Sure it was deemed obscene; Nijinsky was letting an animal tell a bedroom truth about man. But it was also a syntactical strategy that worked like a metaphor, allowing the dancer to move between two worlds, to sidestep the aesthetic and lie down in the instinctual—Nijinsky's own ultimate journey (and the continuing subtext of that bastard form, the rock ballet). You could even take it a step further and see the dancer engendering his own next dance: *Le Sacre du printemps*.

Sitting through this interminable evening, you keep wondering what happened to craft, the muscular tension between art and urge. Laura Dean tries to choreograph within ballet's lexical landscape, but tires and gives out. Moulton, Sappington, and Pucci never begin to take classicism seriously, as if there could be no witty repartee with ballet (have they never seen a work by Tharp or Armitage?). They simply shake their political booty, making visual Muzak out of the anything-goes agenda that used to define downtown performance but is now the mainstream cutting edge—a big, dull book that might be titled "My Pelvis, My Self."

Prince's music turns out to be surprisingly low on juice—so much for that little touch of Rudi in the night. The choreographers, unable to cut under its static, disco surface, skim the sonics until the whole evening seems to take place at hip level. There's no space for plié, the ballet dancer's mortal coil and cohering consonant, with its guttural roundness, fullness, and ready future tense. I've never seen Joffrey dancers look so forced *and* underused, so cold in the leg, so old.

But *Billboards* is a "landmark" and is filling the halls with Prince fans and Joffrey followers—two audiences for the price of one, not bad for a recession. As for new audiences in search of classical dance, should they find their way to the big hit *Billboards* chances are they won't come back to the Joffrey's *Les Presages* or Ashton evening or *Faune*. How would they know that the art of Petipa, Balanchine, or even Robert Joffrey is more than flash dance with an odd semiotics of pink toe shoes and pirouettes?

When the company calls *Billboards* a "remarkable collaboration," the words ring ominous, as in "we're all pretending this piece is good for something." And it is. Read that video jacket copy again, and you'll find a coded confession, the ballet's not so subtle symbolism. It's about paying "bills" (which the Joffrey has plenty of) and appeasing "boards" (which set the fiscal agenda) and advertising for a ballet audience when the company should be creating one. *Billboards* is all about "selling-out" to the "crowds."

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The media

Finding "significance," telling "The Story"

by James Bowman

Oh Lord, please let O. J. Simpson be found —swiftly—innocent. Thus I prayed, in vain, back in June. Not because I have any love for O. J. Simpson. My second choice, I am ashamed to admit, would have been for the implicit promise of suicide in his lugubrious note to have been fulfilled. But there was no way to stop the media parade that formed up behind the famous Ford Bronco and that would continue for months through what Robert Shapiro, one of Simpson's battery of lawyers, has called the most intensively covered trial "in the history of the world." Just having to watch this great bubble of speculation, theory, and interpretation already forming above the case was a cup which I would have had pass from me. Alas, it was not to be.

By August, the acting Secretary of State for the State of California asked the judge in the case to suspend the trial on November 7th and 8th so that people could vote. Governor "Pete" Wilson and his Democratic opponent in that election, Kathleen Brown, were both holding election news conferences down at the court house. That was where all the reporters were, and going to them was the only way they could get a decent turnout. One member of Miss Brown's staff was delegated to follow the case so that she could avoid conflicts with O. J.-mania. At least four bills, to do with checkbook journalism, spousal abuse, domestic violence, and DNA testing, were introduced into the state legislature as a result of the case.

Though not as bad as it was in California, O. J.'s hostile takeover of the news was not to be avoided anywhere in the country. But I only realized how bad it really was when I saw that *TV Guide* had joined in the chorus of solemn consideration of the deeper meaning and social significance of the O. J. phenomenon. I felt as if I had come upon a philosophical treatise in a comic book. By Neal Gabler, author of a forthcoming book on Walter Winchell, the article no doubt had some cogent things to say, but none more cogent than this: when *TV Guide* takes to running think pieces, the question of "significance" is transmuted. The real significance of the O. J. craze was our exposure as a nation of "significance" scavengers, endlessly picking through the landfills of popular culture for little nuggets of meaning that will reveal ourselves to ourselves.

The oddest thing about Gabler's piece was his insistence on what "riveting" stuff the show was, how it "held us in its thrall" and was, in spite of the horror it involved, "fabulously, deliriously, dizzyingly *entertaining* . . . one whale of a narrative . . . the news equivalent of a great beach read." Michiko Kakutani of *The New York Times*, wreathed in literary-historical archetypes and helpfully reminding us that "Evil, of course, has always exerted a powerful fascination," agreed:

> What the Simpson story possesses is a raw narrative appeal that uncannily taps into the col-

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> lective unconscious, combining the most sensationalistic aspects of a variety of literary genres, from Greek tragedy to the gothic romance to the true crime thriller.

Huh? Was I missing something? Had my share of the collective unconscious, neither cannily nor uncannily tapped into, run dry? I like a great beach read as well as the next man, but I had not the slightest desire to watch or read anything about O. J. Simpson —at least not after the live coverage of the Ford Bronco playing follow-the-leader with the police on the freeway. Then there had been some prospect (a slight one, admittedly) of seeing a famous person blowing his brains out on live TV.

I suspect that I was not the only one among the 95 million who watched this merely decorative chase (the audience for the Super Bowl—in which O. J.'s old team lost for the fourth consecutive year, possibly unhinging him—was 90 million, *TV Guide* helpfully informs us) whose interest in it was exhausted with our vain exhortation to "Jump, jump!"—or, in this case, "Shoot, shoot!" And among those whose fascination with the case was such that they watched hour after hour of the preliminary hearing on television, so many of them dropped out along the way that when Jim Morin of *The Miami Herald* drew a cartoon which joked about an 800 number for the fed-up, a seller of orthotic and prosthetic equipment in Pennsylvania whose phone rings if you dial that number (1-800-NO MORE OJ) was swamped with calls and had to close the number down for a few days. I, too, longed for some way to make my feeble protest.

But what was so exciting about the story in the first place? For all Miss Kakutani's invocation of Milton and Dostoevsky and Genet and Norman Mailer and her editorializing colleagues' seconding of her comparison of Mr. Simpson to a hero of Greek tragedy, it was hard to see him as being of genuinely heroic stature. A guy who was a great athlete and at the same time good-looking and personable enough to make second and third careers as an actor and sports commentator is thought to have murdered his wife. Is that the stuff to inspire pity and terror? Is a news story about it even intrinsically shocking? Of course, we should be shocked if he were a friend or a neighbor; but we know that, as the feminists rightly point out, wives are murdered every day. The law of averages would predict that sooner or later a celebrity, a star, would show up among the murderers or the murderees.

Perhaps the story was only "riveting" to those naïve enough to suppose that they know celebrities in the same way that they know their friends and neighbors. That, at any rate, appears to be the view of Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek*, who took his text from Gilbert and Sullivan: "Things are seldom what they seem / Skim milk masquerades as cream." Likewise, he says, we are seduced by television into supposing that we know the celebrities who appear on it, but we really don't. The pretense that we are meeting the "real" film star or politician or other celebrity whom we see on the news or talk shows creates further illusions—for example, that controversy can be aired in televised trials or political debates and the people can be allowed to judge for themselves. But these televisual experiences are shot through with the potential for deception. We don't know the "real" anybody.

Now tell me: who does not know this? Are there really people who believe implicitly in the "reality" of everything they see on TV? Perhaps there are, but it is hard to see what TV has to do with it. Do such people *not* believe everything they see *off* TV? Common sense would suggest that gullibility is gullibility and is the fault of the gullible, not that of the medium through which their deceivers are enabled to reach them. Alter's charge against the media is like blaming guns for the fact that criminals are shooting people or, indeed, the knife for murdering Mrs. Simpson. I agree that it was O. J.'s celebrity which made the story compelling, but that was not because we thought we knew him. It was because we knew we didn't know him.

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Consider: millions of people who had barely heard of O. J. Simpson—who was one of the greatest of athletes but only a second-string celebrity—must have joined in the endless talk about his case. They did so because his celebrity validated their prurience. Most of us would have some delicacy about prying the lid off the private life of friends or neighbors who had the misfortune to be involved in a domestic murder—and friends and neighbors of Mr. Simpson resent all the media attention. As one local reporter in California (a black man) was doing a stand-up outside the ice-cream shop in Brentwood which Nicole Simpson visited just before her death, a sign could be seen in the background, held up by a man in a suit: "TV News exploits our neighborhood." Alas for him, celebrities are not friends or neighbors but public property. It is just because we know that our acquaintance with them is of an attenuated, remote, televisual kind that we feel licensed to indulge our natural curiosity about details of their lives which we should consider outrageous were they to be known about us.

This is not quite the same thing as a "riveting" story. It is more like slowing down on the highway to get a good look at an accident scene on the side of the road. It is the way of the world: if people are going to get killed in public they have got to expect to be stared at. Media people are as susceptible to this rubbernecking impulse as anyone else. Thus a brief filed in the Simpson case by CNN, CBS, the Copley Press, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek*, and *USA Today* asked the judge for "access" to photographs of the bodies "solely for the limited purpose of viewing the photographs, without making copies, videotaping or otherwise replicating the exhibits." The media folk just wanted to have a look, even when it could not do anything to pump up their ratings. Moreover, although television ratings did go up during the week that all the networks abandoned their daytime programming in order to cover the preliminary hearing, revenue went down, because stations could not run so many commercials.

As it is almost a reflex to gawk when man or nature affords us such a memento mori, it is hardly something worth complaining about. But to me it is a bit worrying that so many observers strained to dignify that reflex with words appropriate to the great stories of literature. It is a failure to make vital distinctions and related to the academic trend of teaching Shakespeare and Batman comics as if they were equivalent cultural artifacts. In both cases amusing but trivial and unserious stuff—gossip, scandal, the Bobbitt and Tonya Harding sagas—are proudly welcomed into the places of honor in our public discourse from which they have hitherto been excluded. Who can doubt that this breakdown of distinctions is detrimental to civility and decorum?

Those who blame the ratings- or circulation-greedy media for this sorry state of affairs are like those who blame swarthy Colombian gunmen for the drug problem. The merchants of words and images, like those of pharmacological shortcuts to happiness, are only giving us what we want. If we really wanted more serious, less tabloidy news, that is the sort of news we would have. But our protests against tabloidism are too often insincere. The same people who blame the media for its preoccupation with O. J. and similar stories will then proceed to drag this honest tabloid trash out of the proper receptacles and trick it out as serious social commentary.

At the time of writing, it is beginning to look as if the more political of the significance-scavengers in this case are gaining strength at the expense of the structuralist critics, who isolate this or that strain of Simpsoniana as paradigmatic of what is wrong with the media or America or both. Feminists have used the story as a pretext for trotting out their scare stories about spousal abuse. The pop psychobabbler Mariah Burton Nelson was certainly in the right place at the right time, having just published a book called *The Stronger Women Get, the More Men Love Football: Sexism and the American Culture of Sports*. Not surprisingly, she found that O. J. "was raised in a sports culture that

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taught him to denigrate women. . . . He learned the female role is to cheer for men and be sexually available to men. That's why he abused Nicole." Q.E.D.

Meanwhile, a number of professional American Africans were trying to—or trying not to—see the record of Simpson's wife-beating as evidence of a conspiracy among the white establishment to bring down a powerful black man just because he was black. Other laments ranged from that of Anne Applebaum in the British *Spectator*, who said the story left us with nothing else to watch on television, to that of a fatuous editorialist for *The Washington Post*, who opined that the dream of a "color-blind" America could not survive the fall of a "role model" such as Simpson—a man whose accomplishments in life amounted to some years of skillful running, one day a week for five months of the year, with a football tucked under his arm and some more years of far less skillful acting in films and on TV.

I hope I may be pardoned for thinking that if racial harmony was such a fragile thing as this, it could not have amounted to much in the first place. But some rationalization is required for the portentousness that accompanied so much of the reporting of the affair. Get, for instance, the fine writing in a *Newsweek* lead paragraph:

> As the police stood back, waiting, the shadows lengthened. O. J., the great halfback who had made a fabulous career out of running for daylight, could no more hold back the night than reverse the tragedy of his week. Above, helicopters hovered, each carrying enough candlepower to light a village. Near the truck a dog stretched lazily, beside a garden as beautiful as a rainbow. And then O. J. emerged, turned himself over to the police, used his bathroom, accepted a glass of juice and, like sons everywhere caught in trouble, asked for time to call his mother.

Later we find that the bodies of Mrs. Simpson and Mr. Goldman were "as crumpled and porous as Caesar's" and that Simpson's surrender "put an end to the Day of the Locust atmosphere building in the streets." Such stuff is credited to no fewer than eight writers, but it is clearly a house style for dealing with the biggest stories, whether they have to do with international crises or with a sordid little domestic slaying. That style also appeared in the significance-mongering of Curry Kirkpatrick's accompanying box (one of seven!): "And what else was it? Traces of Cain? Othello? The travail of a mixed-race relationship? Or was this another case of power/money/fame's wretched song of impenetrability?" Some song that must be! I wonder if Mr. Kirkpatrick can whistle a few bars?

Since when has it been part of the job of journalists to ask pretentious questions instead of confining themselves to answering much humbler ones? I liked it better when you didn't get quite so high a class of reportage. The simple fellows with their simple inverted pyramids who used not to presume to tell us anything more than who, what, where, when, why, and how now all seem to have been crowded out by Ivy League English majors trying to write like William Faulkner. Why do they have to descend upon O. J. and similar stories rather than retiring gracefully to the chronicling of some decidedly unsensational Yoknapatawpha of their own? I don't know the answer to that question, but I know that it has to do with a pretty basic tendency of our culture. And that I do not like it.

By the first week of August, *TV Guide* reported that the disastrous flight of refugees from Rwanda into Zaire had finally overtaken the O. J. Simpson story as the biggest preoccupation of television news. The *Guide*'s reporter quotes Erik Sorenson, head of "CBS Evening News," and Peter Jennings of ABC as boasting of the influence of their own "minicam diplomacy" on the decision of the Clinton administration to send $100 million worth of assistance to the refugees.

But Clinton had reason to be grateful for both Rwanda and O. J. as big distractions from the congressional hearings into the Whitewater affair. The hopeful headline of

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the "National Report" of *The New York Times* on August 8th ran: "Outside the Beltway, Whitewater Scandal Looks Like a Dud." By this the editors meant that it was not a very compelling media event. In the words of the sub-head: "'It's No O. J.,' Says a Richmond Man." The accompanying vox-pop article by Isabel Wilkerson never quite made up its mind whether it was an assessment of the attitude of (presumably) randomly selected people to Whitewater or to the media coverage of it. CBS's decision not to televise any of the hearings is put beside the opinions of a number of people who agree with Richmond Man that the hearings are "boring" or who have paid no attention to the matter and think that Roger Altman is the film director who made *Short Cuts*.

Not surprisingly, the tediousness of the hearings was frequently referred to in accounts of them by publications of Clinton's political stripe. David Corn in *The Nation* referred to them as "mind-numbing" and "farcical" while Weston Kosova in *The New Republic* found them "tiresome" and repetitive and said that they hadn't "yielded much in the way of enlightenment." But it is still a little surprising to find as the lead of the "National Report" in *The New York Times* an article about how boring a story is. If it is so boring, why is it to be supposed that it will be interesting to report that it is boring? Only the previous Thursday, Walter Goodman's "Critic's Notebook" back in the "Arts" section had claimed that the hearings "caught fire" in their second week and were quite amusing, at least, before that because of the consequences of the sabotage of the House Banking Committee hearings by the committee's chairman, Henry Gonzalez.

But on the news side, they didn't need to watch the hearings to know that they were boring. They were boring by definition, even if they were admitted to threaten the Clinton presidency. The day before Miss Wilkerson's story, the Sunday *Times* ran one by Michael Wines headed "Boredom Mixed with a Danger: Even Tedious Whitewater Hearings Bode Ill for President." How could this be? How can these by now legendarily boring hearings bode ill for anyone but those conducting them? Because, Wines says, although it is trivial in itself and "eye-glazing" in its televisual impact, Whitewater has become "a metaphor for qualms about the President and the way he leads."

> For the Administration, the abiding worry of Whitewater may not be the unlikely prospect that it conceals some devastating misdeed—although that surely would be damaging—but the growing likelihood that it will take a long time for the public to conclude whether any such misdeeds exist. For the longer voters remain skeptical of Mr. Clinton, the less likely they are to credit him for genuine achievements, whether trade pacts or insurance laws or welfare overhaul.

Of course, the trope of the public's boredom with the story could also be a way of placating an uneasy conscience. Enough has come out of the Whitewater hearings and the investigations of anti-Clinton partisans that the journalistic fraternity must have vague feelings that they ought to be doing more. Even the *Times*'s own editorial page has long insisted on the seriousness of the matter. But boredom is a pretty lame excuse for not treating serious matters seriously. Public attitudes toward a story cannot be isolated from the storyteller's treatment of it, and if the story is boring to the journalists reporting it, why should they expect it to be any more interesting to their audience?

But there are reasons other than political bias for their boredom. For petty chicanery in Arkansas is not The Story about Bill Clinton. The Story changes from time to time, of course. At first it was about how Clinton bounced back from the presumed effect of Gennifer Flowers's allegations. Then it was The Man from Hope—the humble beginnings, the Kennedy mantle, euphoria among Democrats, and a Hope-ful future for us all. Then The Story became Clinton's political ineptitude as the Nannygate stories were succeeded by Waco, Lani Guinier, and the $200 haircut. Then it became enmeshed for

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a while with the story of the master of spin doctoring, the Svengali-like David Gergen, who single-handedly saved the presidency and made Clinton look like a clever politician once again.

The passing of the budget by a single vote in both houses of Congress last August set the seal on this new Story, which remained essentially intact until the simultaneous eruption of new Whitewater and Fornigate allegations at the end of the year. Then The Story became that of the *beleaguered President*, a *flawed Idealist* whose *right-wing critics* are attempting to work up a series of peccadillos and trivial mistakes into a scandal that will prevent him from proceeding with his agenda for reform of the American system of health care and other important matters. What fits with that Story will be interesting and so will be reported; what does not will be boring and will not be reported.

Thus when the President staged a prime-time news conference while the hearings were going on he got only four questions about Whitewater, and only one of those asking him to comment on the substance of what had come out in the hearings. The first question, from Rita Braver, seemed to have no other purpose than to restate The Story for the President's comment:

> President Clinton, a number of political analysts, including some who are quite friendly to you, have said that the focus on the Whitewater affair has both undercut public confidence in you and also in your ability to get your programs through Congress. Do you agree with that? And what impact do you think Whitewater has had, particularly with the hearings this week?

Her interest in Whitewater is not in anything that anyone in the administration may or may not have done wrong but in *the focus* on Whitewater and *the impact* it has had. In essence, she is asking the President *The New York Times*'s vox-pop question—how interested are you in Whitewater?—as if he were just some average TV channel surfer. And he made clear to the press that he wasn't interested in it at all: he hadn't watched any of it on television. Instead, he took advantage of Miss Braver's question to reiterate those two statements that could not be reiterated enough: that he had done nothing wrong and (twice) that he was just trying his best to help the American people.

That's what fits with The Story. Thus, too, when Clinton publicly chastised Rush Limbaugh for his criticisms and spoke of the need for a "truth detector," the press eagerly took up the cry and began running stories about Limbaugh's supposed inaccuracies or falsehoods. This was not so much because of bias against Limbaugh as because, since he is a *right-wing critic* trying to make a big deal out of the minor stuff associated with Whitewater for his own political purposes, he was part of The Story. The Story requires that the *right-wing critics* are motivated by politics, so their attacks on the *beleaguered President* who is also the *flawed Idealist* cannot be based on anything but trivialities. That is how we know that they are trivialities and why the Whitewater hearings were by definition about trivialities and why *The New York Times* sent reporters out to get vox-pop stories on how trivial it all is.

It is not so much that people in the media tend to have a liberal bias, though several studies have shown that they do. Nor do they necessarily have a pro-Clinton bias. The Story of the *flawed Idealist* that has prevailed through most of 1994 allows for sub-stories about the Idealist's flaws. But these flaws are of the type revealed in Bob Woodward's book *The Agenda*—his violent temper, for instance—rather than any shady money dealings back in Arkansas, which have already been discounted because they were ignored during the campaign when The Story was about more interesting things. The point is that it is The Story which dictates the coverage instead of the other way around. If The Story ever becomes (as it may do) that of the good man corrupted and gradually destroyed by some combination of lust and ambition, the press will not be able to get enough of Whitewater. But that isn't The Story. Yet.

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Books

A key to Mrs. Eddy

by Marc M. Arkin

Of all the strange, and frantic, and incomprehensible, and uninterpretable books which the imagination of man has created, surely this one [Science and Health] *is the prize example. It is written with a limitless confidence and complacency, and with a dash and stir and earnestness which often compel the effects of eloquence, even when the words do not seem to have any traceable meaning. There are plenty of people who imagine they understand the book; I know this, for I have talked with them; but in all cases they were people who also imagined that there were no such things as pain, sickness and death, and no realities in the world; nothing actually existent but Mind. It seems to me to modify the value of their testimony.*

—Mark Twain, "Christian Science and the Book of Mrs. Eddy" (1899)

On February 1, 1866, a forty-five-year-old woman of few prospects slipped and fell on the icy streets of Lynn, Massachusetts, while on her way to a meeting of the Linwood Lodge of Good Templars, a social and temperance organization. In its brief account of the incident, the *Lynn Reporter* stated that the victim was "taken up in an insensible condition" and carried to a nearby house for the night, where a doctor found her injuries to be "internal and of a very serious nature." The next day, she was removed to her home, "though in a very critical condition."

Then, according to the victim, "on the third day," after reading the words of Matthew 9:2—in which Jesus heals the crippled man—she arose from her bed, having healed herself. Six months later, newly separated from her husband, she was afloat in the yeasty Victorian boarding-house subculture of mind cure and spiritualism, furiously at work on a brand-new exegesis of Scripture while developing her "science of health." She spent the ensuing decade wandering through the threadbare parlors of New England, endlessly arguing, formulating, and reformulating her revelation, seeking to give it voice and to share it with others. When she emerged in 1875, it was to publish the first edition of *Science and Health* and, a year later, to establish the Christian Science Association.

Of all the many prophets spawned by nineteenth-century America, Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy (1821–1910), the founder of Christian Science, was assuredly the most exasperating. She left a trail of embittered former followers, sensational litigation, and splinter churches. Gifted with a literary style that verged on free association, she revised both her books and her life story as the needs of the moment required. No other religious figure occasioned such an outpouring of literary spleen: an entire book from Mark Twain, sporadic outbursts from H. L. Mencken, and even a brief riposte from Noël Coward.

At the same time, Mrs. Eddy led a life of remarkable achievement. From a penniless divorcée, she rose to a position of wealth and power, with a personal estate valued at

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more than two million dollars. The institutional church she founded and led encompassed a major publishing empire, a monumental Mother Church edifice in Boston, and a membership estimated at .25 percent of the United States population with historically the highest percentage of urban, female, and adult members—and probably the greatest wealth per capita—of any large denomination. Her major work, *Science and Health*, sold over four hundred thousand copies during her lifetime. And this, of course, ignores her primary claim on the public attention, her status as a divinely inspired—and uniquely American—prophet.

Curiously, little in Mrs. Eddy's core message was particularly novel; in fact, for much of her life she was dogged by allegations that she had simply stolen the ideas of her mentor, Phineas Parkhurst Quimby. As embodied in its authoritative text, *Science and Health*, the basic doctrinal insight of Christian Science is, simply put, that God—or "Mind"—is all; the real man, not the mortal man, is a reflection of God. The seemingly objective world of the senses is unreal, or mere "belief." "Matter and death are mortal illusions," as are sin, pain, and illness. During Mrs. Eddy's lifetime, Christian Science primarily concerned itself with health and the training of healers. In itself, this was hardly an untoward effort; not until the end of the First World War could medical science cure more people than it harmed.

Thus, the source of Mrs. Eddy's peculiar fascination must lie in her own exceedingly complex persona rather than in her ideas. And, unsurprisingly, Mrs. Eddy has provided grist for innumerable biographies, ranging from the muckraking work of Georgine Milmine at the turn of the century to the recent multi-volume hagiography by the late Robert Peel, himself a Christian Scientist. Anyone who would enter into such a crowded field must be possessed of great temerity, a narrative gift—or a gimmick. Robert David Thomas has a gimmick. His new study of Mrs. Eddy, "*With Bleeding Footsteps*," focuses on "psychoanalytic questions about the Eddy material," bringing to bear on its subject the insights, such as they are, of contemporary pyschoanalytic theory.[1]

This is an earnest book; it is the product of much labor; it contains significant and interesting source material; it attempts to please everyone; it is utterly without irony. Irony is useful in dealing with the life of Mary Baker Eddy. It implies no disrespect; it simply avoids confusing the messenger with her message.

Born in 1821 on a farm in Bow, New Hampshire, Mary Baker was the youngest of six children. Her childhood surroundings appear to have been relatively prosperous and normal. Early on, however, she manifested a variety of intractable nervous ailments. Unable to attend school regularly, she somehow managed an education, and, by the age of twelve, was developing into a local poet, producing doleful meditations on life and death in the sentimental idiom of the day.

In 1836, the Bakers moved up the social ladder to the more prosperous town of Sanbornton Bridge. There, Mary Baker joined the Congregational Church and, in 1843, at the age of twenty-two, married George Washington Glover. The newlyweds immediately moved south to pursue Glover's construction business. Within a year, the business had failed and Glover was dead of yellow fever. Three months pregnant, Mary Baker Glover had no choice but to return to Sanbornton Bridge and the life of a dependent relation. Back in New Hampshire, her ailments reappeared in acute form, particularly after the birth of her son, George. So severe were Mrs. Glover's symptoms that the child was farmed out to a family retainer, an arrangement eventually made permanent. The family made efforts at treatment with morphine and mesmerism. Her father had the nearby streets covered with tan bark and straw to muffle the sound of horses' hooves. Unofficial sources relate, however, that the

1 "*With Bleeding Footsteps*": *Mary Baker Eddy's Path to Religious Leadership*, by Robert David Thomas; Knopf, 363 pages, $27.50.

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only measure that brought relief was a giant cradle rigged out of a daybed, rocked by a hired man especially delegated to the task.

Despite—or perhaps because of—her fragility, Mary Glover did not want for suitors, and in 1853 she married the most ardent of them, Daniel Patterson, an itinerant dentist. The bride's complaints asserted themselves with such force on the wedding day that the groom had to carry her downstairs for the ceremony and back to her sickbed afterward. The marriage was a miserable one, marked by poverty, frequent relocations, and rumored infidelities on the part of the often absent Dr. Patterson. Under these circumstances, Mary Patterson's ill-health persisted—taking the self-described form of "spinal inflammation and its train of sufferings—gastric and bilious." She also gained the insights that would later give the chapter on marriage in *Science and Health* its distinctly mordant tinge.

It was as an invalid in 1862 that Mary Patterson traveled to Portland, Maine, to seek out Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, a former clockmaker whose reputation as a successful mental healer had spread through the New England grapevine of water-cure spas, Graham dieters, mesmerists, spiritualists, and health cultists generally. Almost immediately after treatment by Quimby, Mrs. Patterson was sufficiently restored to climb the 182 steps of Portland's city hall tower. Thereafter, she studied with Quimby, praised him in print, expounded his theories in public lectures, and tried her own hand as a healer. But in mid-January 1866, after a series of personal setbacks and hard on the heels of her father's passing, she received the news of Quimby's death. Within weeks, Mrs. Patterson achieved her Lynn epiphany and embarked on her true life's work.

In 1875, when she ended her boarding-house hegira to settle in a small house at 8 Broad Street in Lynn, Mary Glover (as she was known after her 1873 divorce) was a woman with an institutional mission. A failed partnership with "Dr." Richard Kennedy—he practiced as a healer while she taught her theories—focused her energies. In 1877, she married Asa Gilbert Eddy, a devoted adherent, who shared her work. By 1879, the Church of Christ, Scientist, was formally chartered, followed in 1881 by the Massachusetts Metaphysical College, an institutional vehicle for Mrs. Eddy's classes.

Within the year, however, a series of defections and lawsuits disrupted the fledgling movement, a pattern that continued throughout Mrs. Eddy's life. Gathering the remnant of her flock about her, the sixty-year-old Mrs. Eddy—newly ordained as pastor—transferred her operation to Boston. Shortly after the move, Christian Science suffered a more awkward setback. Gilbert Eddy died, casting doubt on the efficacy of his wife's healing methods. Mrs. Eddy, however, had an answer. Mr. Eddy had died from an attack of negative telepathic forces, or animal magnetism—later Christian Scientists called it malicious animal magnetism, or "MAM"—directed at him by Dr. Kennedy and other enemies. Conventional physicians, brought in at the last moment, placed the cause of death as heart failure.

Once in Boston, the movement grew rapidly. The key to Mrs. Eddy's success was her ability to inspire students—many of them women—to become dedicated adherents who established themselves as Christian Science practitioners throughout the country, organizing local societies wherever possible. In 1882, Christian Science was a single fifty-member congregation; in 1890 it had twenty churches, ninety societies, at least 250 practitioners, thirty-three teaching centers, and a monthly journal with a circulation of ten thousand. In 1898, Mrs. Eddy added a weekly paper, followed ten years later by a daily, the famous *Christian Science Monitor*. In the meantime, *Science and Health* underwent repeated revision, for a staggering total of 382 editions before Mrs. Eddy's death in 1910.

Despite her personal wealth, power, and fame, Mrs. Eddy's life was anything but tranquil. By the late 1880s, unfavorable publicity and dissension in the ranks—as well as her fear of malicious animal mag-

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netism—caused Mrs. Eddy to seclude herself. In 1892, she settled at Pleasant View, a mansion near her childhood home in Bow, although she removed her household to Chestnut Hill, outside Boston, for the last two years of her life, apparently because MAM had come to permeate her New Hampshire home. During the last nineteen years of her life, she visited Boston only four times, not even attending the 1895 dedication of the Mother Church. Suffering from increasingly frequent attacks of kidney stones, sources report that she had recourse to morphine in her last years, succumbing to what her death certificate listed as pneumonia in 1910.

In the meticulously ordered haven of Pleasant View, Mrs. Eddy responded to the crisis in Christian Science. She reorganized her church, centralizing ecclesiastical power in herself, curbing the independence of branch churches and practitioners. All the while, she was surrounded by devoted adherents who stood watch night and day to counteract the effects of malicious animal magnetism, which now caused phenomena as various as printing-press breakdowns, Mrs. Eddy's fainting spells, and unsettled weather. Thomas amply documents both the rigidly controlled routine of life at Pleasant View and Mrs. Eddy's simultaneously erratic conduct of her personal relationships—she was given to moods of great warmth and maternal affection, interspersed with sudden vicious chastisements that left her followers reeling.

Skeptical observers have traced some of the impetus for these developments to the extraordinary career of Josephine Curtis Woodbury, at one time a prominent Christian Science teacher and healer. As Thomas delicately explains, "it was an ill-kept secret" that Mrs. Woodbury had not had sexual relations with Mr. Woodbury "for some time." In itself, this was not extraordinary, since Mrs. Eddy taught that "the scientific *morale* of marriage is spiritual unity"; "its material conditions can only be permitted for the purpose of generating." When Mrs. Woodbury turned up pregnant, however, she seems to have seized upon another of Mrs. Eddy's teachings; a more extreme speculation, since discarded, that a sufficiently spiritual person would be able to reproduce without engaging in such "material conditions." In June 1890, Mrs. Woodbury presented the world with a robust baby boy, whom she christened Prince of Peace —"little Immanuel" to his intimates. During the baptism, the proud mother held her spiritual child underwater for so long he nearly drowned; she had hoped to prove that he was not subject to the illusions of the material world, such as breathing. The story degenerated into low farce when Mrs. Woodbury demanded gifts on behalf of the new Messiah, leading some of the faithful to buy stock in a device to which Mr. Woodbury held the rights, a so-called "air engine." Although Mrs. Eddy eventually disassociated herself from her wayward student, it was not without much embarrassment, public recrimination, and Mrs. Woodbury's inevitable libel suit.

The Woodbury episode also highlights a less mainstream side of Mrs. Eddy's teachings. Not only was Christian Science institutionally a women's movement, but, as late as the final edition of *Science and Health*, Mrs. Eddy toyed with the idea of a gender-free world, in which "white-robed purity will unite in one person masculine wisdom and feminine love"—reflecting a gender-neutral deity—"God as Father-Mother." At times, Mrs. Eddy ventured a little further in her theological speculations. In 1881, in the midst of her tribulations, she fell into a trance and, in front of amazed followers, proclaimed "The Womanhood of God."

Mrs. Eddy's own place in all this is a bit more elusive. At the very least, Mary Baker Eddy believed that she had discovered the "key" to the previously hidden meaning of Scripture and that this discovery was divinely inspired and publicly authoritative. There are other indications that she—or her followers—believed she was the woman "travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered" of Revelation 12:2 and that she occupied the status of "the Daughter of God as

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Christ," who had come again in female form to reveal the "Motherhood of God." Although the church later discouraged the deification of "personal revelators," as Thomas nicely observes, Mrs. Eddy herself failed to put a quick end to such talk.

This is nothing if not a colorful tale, and one which might be ripe for the jaundiced eye of a trained mental-health professional. Unfortunately, neither Thomas's narrative skills nor his insights are up to the quality of his material. Thomas explicitly eschews institutional history—and, on occasion, chronology; thus the reader seeking a straightforward account of Mrs. Eddy's life is advised to look elsewhere. Thomas has also attempted to write a book that is acceptable both to Mrs. Eddy's critics and to her admirers—what some might call an impossible task—and the effort keeps the book slightly off-kilter as its perspective shifts from paragraph to paragraph.

In fact, in what appears to be a biographer's variant on Ruskin's pathetic fallacy, Thomas's prose is every bit as addled as Mrs. Eddy's. A few randomly chosen examples will suffice. A sick child is "especially vulnerable to the feelings of separation, for instead of tameable passions, they become lions and tigers threatening an inner fragmentation and possible annihilation"; during one of Mrs. Patterson's illnesses "her head hurt so badly that the rattling of pots and pans from the kitchen under her room jangled her nerves and worsened her pain. In the throes of such anguish and despair, she nostalgically yearned to see her son again"; Christian Science was a "Protestant-capitalist version of nurturance, but precisely for whom will have to await a demographic study, if the data exists."

The book also raises deeper methodological difficulties. As Thomas recognizes, Mrs. Eddy was engaged in "actively reinventing herself by reconstructing her past"; she "played with her memories in a creative way, altering them into spiritual folk tales, into religious myths." Her 1891 memoir, *Retrospection and Introspection*, is a model of such personal reinvention. Unfortunately, having established the unreliability of his chief witness, Thomas rests much of his case on exactly those memories, rarely distinguishing contemporaneous accounts from recollections recorded later in life.

Even were Thomas's data reliable—or handled more adroitly—it remains problematic to try to understand nineteenth-century Americans through the glass of twentieth-century psychiatric categories. As the historian Forrest McDonald has remarked of Americans a century earlier, "They had their own models of normal and abnormal behavior, and if one is to pry into their psyches, those models alone are relevant." In fact, there is something jarring about the attempt to reconstruct an interior monologue of a person long dead—"must have" appears to be Thomas's favorite verb form, as in "she must have felt"—no matter how well and consistently it is done.

Even on its own terms, Thomas's approach is hampered by his desire to be all things to all men, a desire fueled by his lurking suspicion that any criticism of Mrs. Eddy must be actuated by sexism. In the text, for example, Thomas takes Mrs. Eddy's accounts of her physical sufferings at face value, but tucked away in a footnote, he observes that individuals may express emotional turmoil through physical symptoms as an unconscious device for resolving inner conflicts. Only there does he use the dread word "psychosomatic," a word that suggests itself to the lay reader fairly early in the tale.

Similarly, in discussing the vexed question of malicious animal magnetism, Thomas explains that, under the pressure of Mrs. Eddy's separation anxieties, "the self that had been carefully constructed and pieced together in her conversion experience would begin to fragment and she would be thrown back into the horrors of death. . . . [Her] strengths *temporarily* collapsed and coalesced into the fear of an outside force: malicious animal magnetism." Although Mrs. Eddy's actions then "seemed to be colored by the characteristics usually associated with paranoia," Thomas assures us that "in Mrs.

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Eddy's world, one governed by a unique set of rules, the fears of mesmerism made sense; they were not paranoid delusions but legitimate perceptions of reality." A skeptical reader might suggest that Mrs. Eddy's world is not the apposite reference point on this particular issue. In any event, a page later Thomas seems to acknowledge as much; he revisits the matter to assert that we cannot say which of Mrs. Eddy's episodes were "'normal'" and which represented a "slide into paranoia." But then, talking about students of Christian Science, Thomas expresses "no doubt" in concluding that fears of MAM assumed pathological dimensions.

Perhaps the best that can be said of such efforts is, to paraphrase the old saw, what is valid is not novel and what is novel is unverifiable. And, none of this explains what made Mrs. Eddy unique. After all, large numbers of nineteenth-century adults grew up in Calvinist homes, experienced illness as children, had complex relationships with their parents, and may even have suffered from unresolved fears of separation and death, without turning into prophets and founding new religions. And, more to the point, without managing to get other people to follow them, much less to disbelieve the evidence of their own senses.

Old times down east

Michael Davitt Bell, editor
Sarah Orne Jewett: Novels and Stories.
The Library of America, 937 pages, $35

Paula Blanchard Sarah Orne Jewett:
Her World and Her Work.
A Merloyd Lawrence Book/
Addison-Wesley, 397 pages, $27.50

reviewed by Louis Auchincloss

Literary spinsters in Old New England are often associated with a single house, the family homestead where they continued to reside, alone or with maiden sisters, after their parents were dead. Emily Dickinson lived all her life in the family home in Amherst, as did Amy Lowell in "Sevenels" in Brookline. The white mansion which Sarah Orne Jewett's seafaring and prosperous grandfather purchased in South Berwick, Maine, was the finest in town. Its interior was furnished with elaborate, dentilated cornices, paneled wainscoting, and arches resting on fluted columns, and it was furnished with Chippendale and Sheraton. Sarah as a child lived in the simpler neighboring abode of her father, a country doctor, but in later life, after his death and that of her grandparents, she moved into the great house and occupied it until her own death in 1909. She was always to feel a deep nostalgia for the departed days of South Berwick's glory as a busy seaport and never quite reconciled herself to the smoky mills which now engaged energies once devoted to the nobler calling of the sea. Her last novel, *The Tory Lover*, depicting her hometown in revolutionary days, is bathed in the sentiment of a lifetime.

Her father, however, had eschewed both sea and sea trade; he was a beloved general practitioner, driving over the countryside in all weathers to attend births and deaths and to give what comfort and cure he could to the ailing. Years after his death, when they were elderly, his daughters were still known as the "doctor's girls." Sarah used to go with him on his rounds and seriously entertained the idea of becoming a doctor herself, but periodic attacks of rheumatoid arthritis, which were to plague her all her life and finally kill her at the age of fifty-nine, prevented fulfillment of this youthful dream. She adopted instead the life of the cultivated young lady of her time: she rode; she sat on charitable committees; she went often to nearby Boston to visit friends, attend lectures, and in particular to hear the inspiring sermons of the great Phillips Brooks in Trinity Church.

Indeed, her deep and lasting concern with religion was to mar some of the joy she derived from her passionate reading of fiction. She didn't like, for example, the characters in Henry James's *The American*,

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which was serialized in *The Atlantic* when she was twenty-seven, nor did she approve of the "moral" of the tale, and she missed in George Eliot's writing "the least suggestion of our having a true and real relationship with God." Nothing, however, would keep her from admiring and reading these masters; it was simply that she resolved that a dimension missing in their work would not be missing in her own.

Jane Austen and Thackeray were her particular favorites. *Vanity Fair* was for her Tolstoy, Zola, and Turgenev "all rolled in one," and *Pendennis* seemed to her greater than *Anna Karenina* and "more full of true humanity." She would be a Victorian to the end. The conquering soldier and the adored poet were her heroes. "No two men I have ever seen came up to Grant and Tennyson in *greatness*," she would one day exclaim.

That she should have started to write early, with contributions to *The Atlantic*, was in the New England tradition. She received enthusiastic encouragement from the editor, William Dean Howells, who wisely noted her remarkable skill in reproducing the dialect of plain Maine farm folk. "You've got an uncommon feeling for *talk*—I *hear* your people," he wrote her. It is interesting that her literary career should have opened and closed with the same form: the loose-leaf novel in which a female narrator gives the reader sketches of persons and places in small Maine villages, frequently allowing one of the persons sketched to tell the narrator a longish tale of family comedy or tragedy. Jewett must have had some sense from the beginning that this was the right medium for her talent; whenever she laid it aside, as she too often did, she achieved something less memorable. It was a pity she did not have a Henry James to warn her, as he did the monologist Ruth Draper when she asked him if she should not, for once anyway, appear in a play with other actors: "You have woven your own magic carpet: *stand* on it!"

It hardly matters that a writer has a limited field if he excels in it. Only a fool would want Jane Austen to write about the Napoleonic wars or Thackeray, the slums of London. Jewett saw all she needed of life in her village and farms. As her biographer, Paula Blanchard, sees it, her stories express a transcendentalism "warmer and more human-centered" than Emerson's, "domesticated and particularized, based less on mystical experience than on the breathing reality of daily life." Jewett does not stint the evils that she saw among Maine country people. Insanity, suicide, loneliness, bitter poverty, wife abuse, and alcoholism inhabit her pages. But these are all a bearable part of the whole. Most of her people, most of the time, can still cope. And wild creatures and plants, as Blanchard observes, are both embodiments and messengers of universal anima: "Birds in particular serve as a kind of ironic commentary on the limited perceptions of human beings. During the walking funeral [the procession from church to graveyard] the song sparrows 'sang and sang, as if with previous knowledge of immortality, and contempt for those who could so pettily concern themselves with death.'"

The Library of America wisely concentrates its edition of Jewett on these Maine stories. Of course, all are not equally well conceived. The difference between success and failure in Jewett's delicate art was always a hairline. The danger that stalked her was sentimentality.

Interestingly enough, Flaubert, the least sentimental of all novelists, was one of her literary models, and she kept two maxims gleaned from his work pinned before her when she wrote: "Write about daily life as you would write history" and "It is not to provoke laughter, nor tears, nor rage, but to act as nature does, that is, to provoke dreaming." Yet however painstaking she was in selecting the *mot juste* for her fine descriptions of Maine landscapes and seascapes, Jewett totally eschewed Flaubert's emotional disengagement with his characters, believing firmly that her talent had been given her by God for the moral improvement of her readers. I think Blanchard makes the best possible case for this attitude. "Stated that

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way," she writes, "[Jewett's] faith might seem to resemble the most banal and sentimental of Victorian platitudes, an embroidered plaque hung on the wall. But because she was who she was, it simply confirmed the strength she already possessed, fostering her native capacities for sympathy and language and freeing her to express them fully through friendship and work."

Having dealt with Jewett's relationship with God, we must now proceed, in the approved fashion of our day, to her relationships with her fellow mortals. She never married. Was she a lesbian? John Greenleaf Whittier asked her once: "Sarah, was thee ever in love?" to which her startled reply was: "No! Whatever made you think that?" Of course, she meant she had never been in love with a *man*. But what about Annie Fields, the brilliant widow of the famed publisher James T. Fields, in whose Boston house on Charles Street Jewett lived for months at a time in the last half of her life and with whom she traveled all over Europe, meeting the celebrities of the literary and political worlds? I think most readers today would go along with Blanchard's conclusion that this was what was known as a "Boston marriage," a homoerotic friendship, entirely approved of in its day, without any physical sexual expression. But I think Blanchard underestimates us when she says that such a relationship is "hardly imaginable to the modern sensibility."

Deephaven, Jewett's first book, was published in 1877, when she was twenty-eight. It provides a beautiful but uneven start to the long series of Maine short stories that was to reach perfection twenty years later in her masterpiece, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Two young city girls go to spend the summer in a Maine coastal village that has just been inherited by one of their families. Their enthusiasm is infectious but superficial; the little book is more like a graceful vacation letter than a novel. It was followed by three small collections of stories and essays: *Old Friends and New*, *Country By-Ways*, and *The Mate of the Daylight*, which all have charm, if a slightly pale and wistful one. And then in 1884 Jewett tried her hand at a more conventional form of novel.

A Country Doctor is drawn in part from Jewett's memories of her father's visits to the sick, on which she often accompanied him. The heroine, Anna, like her creator, wants to become a doctor; but unlike Jewett she succeeds in her goal, giving up, almost cheerfully, all idea of marriage, even though she has an ardent and eligible swain. There is an amusing scene when, at a picnic, Anna crudely dispels her beau's Victorian ideas about the weaker sex by yanking, with one quick practiced pull, the dislocated arm bone of a farmer back into its socket. But the lectures that Jewett inserts, as a frank propagandist, on the role of women in the professions, are, of course, of no present importance and interrupt the flow of the narrative.

A more important flaw in the book is the failure of its long beginning to hang together with the middle and end. This is a common fault in the Victorian novel, but there it is often obscured by the sheer length of the work. It becomes glaring in one as short as *A Country Doctor*. The childhoods of David Copperfield and Pendennis do not have much to do with the maturities of these protagonists, but there are so many chapters and incidents between the two that the reader never goes back to put them together. The dramatic beginning of Jewett's novel, where Anna's destitute and dying mother staggers over the countryside on a dark night, babe in arms, to seek refuge in her own startled mother's cottage, is too close to the chapters about her daughter's serene life with her guardian not to be correlated. We never know just what was wrong with Anna's mother or why she drank, and the effect of such an inheritance on Anna is, to say the least, cloudy. Had the novel opened with Anna's going to live with Dr. Leslie, we should know as much about Anna as the book in its present form tells us.

Dr. Jewett's death in 1878 was a sad blow to Sarah and intensified her reluctance to take her place in a world of adults. Annie Fields, who to some extent took her father's

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place in her mind and heart, pointed out that she was a curious combination of the immature and the advanced. "She never put her dolls away and always used her child-names, but her plans were large and sometimes startling to others." Three years after her father's death, Jewett was writing about him with the same kind of loving whimsicality that one finds in the letters of Emily Dickinson. "Today is Father's birthday. I wonder if people keep the day they die for another birthday after they get to heaven? I have been thinking of him a very great deal this last day or two. I wonder if I am doing all the things he wishes I would do, and I hope he does not get tired of me."

With *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in 1896, near the end of her writing life, Jewett returned to the fine straight highway of her first book but now with all the experience of twenty rich years of observing and recording. The narrator of the novel, never named but a lady writer of middle years, comes to spend the summer in the coastal village of Dunnet, where she boards with Almira Todd, a widowed herb grower who supplements the work of the local doctor. For fifty cents a week the narrator rents the empty schoolhouse in which to do her writing, but her attention and soon her heart are quickly absorbed by the villagers. Mrs. Todd takes her about to meet everybody and fills in any missing background with stories. Captain Littlepage, cozily crazy, gives her an eerie account of the wraith-like creatures who inhabit the North Pole. She visits Shell-heap Island, where "Poor Joanna Todd," crossed in love, has died a recluse and hears her story; she attends the great reunion of the Bowden clan, a huge family picnic that includes everyone, for nearly everyone is kin. This is the special ceremony of the summer, a kind of fertility rite. She goes out to Green Island to meet Mrs. Todd's wonderfully spry octogenarian mother, Mrs. Blackett, adored by the neighborhood and her bachelor brother, whose forty-year courtship of Esther Hight, the mature Dunnet "shepherdess," culminates in marriage and makes a fitting ending for the book. And finally she meets Mrs. Martin, the "Queen's twin," who was born on the same day as Queen Victoria and who has given her children the names of the princes and princesses. Her little cottage is filled with newspaper and magazine pictures of the glorious reign. The whole portrait of Dunnet is filled with emotion, but very little of it can be expressed. A New England reserve covers all. When our guide takes her leave of Mrs. Todd in the end, she cannot quite bear it, feeling that some demonstration is at last called for, but she is firmly checked: "I could not part so; I ran after her to say good-by, but she shook her head and waved her hand without looking back when she heard my hurrying steps, and so went away down the street."

To me the most beautiful of all Jewett's tales is "A White Heron." Sylvia, a little girl who lives in a hut in the woods with her grandmother, Mrs. Tilley, is guiding their one old cow home from grazing when she encounters a handsome young ornothologist who shoots birds to mount and study them. He is intensely eager to obtain a rare white heron which has been sighted in the neighborhood. He will pay ten dollars for information about it, a fortune to the Tilleys. Sylvia has seen the lovely bird but does not tell him. She takes the young man to her grandmother, who puts him up for a couple of nights. The three become very friendly; Sylvia now makes a romantic hero of him. But on the second night she steals out of the house in early dawn and, at the risk of her life, climbs a gigantic pine, on top of which she finds the heron's nest. When she returns, the old grandmother and the hunter, rightly suspecting where she has been, beg her to tell them what she has seen. But she cannot. "The murmur of the pine's green branches is in her ears; she remembers how the white heron came flying through the golden air and how they watched the sea and the morning together, and Sylvia cannot speak; she cannot tell the heron's secret and give its life away."

Of course, there have been modern critics who see in the great pine that Sylvia so painfully climbs a phallic symbol. I don't think

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Jewett would have cared for that theory, and although it interested and amused me for a while, I at length rejected it. If the tree, like the young man's gun, is a symbol of male force and destructiveness, it also provides shelter and safety for the heron's young.

Blanchard attributes the neglect of Jewett's work in the fifteen years between her death and Willa Cather's re-arousal of interest in it to the patronizing tone of "male literary pundits." Indeed, she regards this tone as a "classic illustration of historic male bias in the canon." I don't agree. It seems to me that fiction is one of the rare fields in which women have shared equal honors with men, and the ultimate judges, *i.e.*, the readers, have had a majority of women. I believe that what Jewett suffered from, and will always suffer from, is the kind of reader, of either sex, who cannot be persuaded that her subject material is "important." There are people who still say that about Jane Austen; Henry James said it about Flaubert, and Theodore Roosevelt said it about Henry James. Anatole France said it about Proust, Edith Wharton about Joyce . . . there is no end to it. Some persons are never going to be persuaded that two semi-literate old farmers' widows sitting on a crumbling back porch in a decayed Maine coastal village are going to have much to say that will interest them. Even the fine Library of America edition of Jewett is not going to make *them* change their minds.

Stories fine & fatuous

Grace Paley The Collected Stories.
Farrar, Straus & Giroux,
386 pages, $27.50

reviewed by Brooke Allen

For someone who has produced so small an *oeuvre*—three slim books of short stories, now collected in one volume—Grace Paley has garnered extraordinary accolades. The critical response has been almost entirely positive, and for over thirty years she has had a devoted if rather limited following. Why all the raves over a writer who, while she certainly has her strong points, is undeniably a specialized taste? Are all the critics who praise her work as enthusiastic in private?

Perhaps the fact is that over the years Paley has become something of a sacred cow. It is universally acknowledged that she is a writer of quality and principles. One feels discourteous in admitting to reservations about her work; she is so obviously on the side of Right and Good. The fact is that Paley has so thoroughly identified her writing with the various causes she espouses—peace, environmentalism, prison reform, feminism—that in criticizing her work one runs the risk of being perceived as a kind of ogre who is out to get the world's oppressed. But putting politics aside, what kind of writer is Grace Paley?

It is admittedly hazardous to read autobiographical elements into fiction, but in this case it is safe at any rate to say that Paley writes about people like herself. She is a second-generation radical, the daughter of Ukrainian Jews, Isaac Goodside and Manya Ridnyk, who ran afoul of the Russian government for agitating against czarist repression in the early part of the century. They emigrated to the United States in 1905; Isaac became a doctor, and Grace was born in the Bronx in 1922.

Paley's fictional alter ego is Faith Darwin, like Paley a divorced mother of two, a grassroots political activist in her New York neighborhood, and a writer. Faith appeared toward the end of Paley's first collection of stories, *The Little Disturbances of Man* (1959), and began so thoroughly to permeate the author's fictional world that her next collection, *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute* (1974), was made up not of discrete fictional pieces but of quasi-fictional fragments united by Faith's vision, which is sometimes central and sometimes marginal to the action. Characters from the first volume were re-introduced until the reader gradually realized that they were all inhabitants of the same New York City neighborhood, con-

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nected by their acquaintance with Faith. *Later the Same Day* (1985) took the technique even further.

Recent analyses of Paley's work have suggested that she developed this style to subvert the linear narrative method of the dominant "patriarchal" culture, rejecting traditional fictional forms of closure in favor of a more fluid, open-ended, and hence "feminine" fiction. I would be prepared to bet that this is indeed Paley's intention; she —or rather, Faith—virtually says as much in "A Conversation with My Father":

> "I would like you to write a simple story just once more," he says, "the kind Maupassant wrote, or Chekhov, the kind you used to write. Just recognizable people and then write down what happened to them next."
>
> I say, "Yes, why not? That's possible." I want to please him, though I don't remember writing that way. I *would* like to try to tell such a story, if he means the kind that begins: "There was a woman . . ." followed by the plot, the absolute line between two points which I've always despised. Not for literary reasons, but because it takes all hope away. Everyone, real or invented, deserves the open destiny of life.

Paley may have a point—few people would claim that the short-story form should have been frozen forever with Chekhov and Maupassant—but in practice her exploratory divergences from the "absolute line" often lead her down a blind alley. Stories like "Politics," "Northeast Playground," "Love," "Anxiety," and "Listening" meander aimlessly, not so much fiction as strings of subjective observations, cozy aphorisms on sex, love, and life.

The stories tend to be about women. In Paley's world men hover on the margins, dropping in for food, sex, and companionship but generally absent from the real business of life, which is child-rearing, housekeeping, and political action. They are rogue wanderers on the earth—this identity is symbolized by Faith's ex-husband, an explorer—while women are the ones who put down roots. For happiness, Faith requires

> three or four best women friends to whom she could tell every personal fact and then discuss on the widest deepest and most hopeful level, the economy, the constant, unbeatable, cruel war economy, the slavery of the American worker to the idea of that economy, the complicity of male people in the whole structure, the dumbness of men (including the preferred man) on the subject. By dumbness, she meant everything dumbness has always meant: silence and stupidity.

Apparently the very fact of their gender, and particularly of motherhood, imparts an earthy wisdom to women; even when they are patently making a mess of their own lives (Faith, for example, acknowledges her weakness for unreliable men), they laugh wryly, confident that they possess an intrinsic moral superiority to men. Faith says that her destiny "is to be, until my expiration date, laughingly the servant of man." But why should she be? Faith and her friends are big on political activism, but they take little enough political action on the home front, seldom questioning their function of ministering to the bodily needs of men. Indeed, they appear to relish that role.

Paley is a feminist but denies being a "feminist writer." Yet she has also stated that "all of art is political; if a writer says this is not political, it's probably the most political thing that he could be doing." More spurious is her assertion that art's function is "to make justice in the world" so that "it almost always has to be on the side of the underdog." One might have thought that in a few trips to the Met, for example, she would have come across some very great art created without that guiding principle; but if Paley's vision is often a narrow one, it is because her own view of history has of necessity been formed by the two defining political events of her own life and of her parents': the persecutions of late czarist Russia and the Holocaust.

Paley's work has very real strengths. She has a perfect ear for the cadences of New York (especially Jewish New York) speech; humor

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is always present, though untouched by irony; she can stunningly portray the pain and fear of motherhood. When she gets away from Faith and her women friends and immerses herself imaginatively in an alien character, she is capable of strong and vivid prose. "The Loudest Voice," the story of a little Jewish girl who gets the lead in the school Christmas play, is an excellent, cohesive story; so is "Goodbye and Good Luck," an aging woman's look back on her lifelong love affair with a glamorous leading man in the Yiddish theater. "Zagrowsky Tells" is a near hit: a pharmacist who discriminated against black customers in the Sixties is now bringing up his own half-black grandson, the child of his schizophrenic daughter. The story is written with touches of virtuosity and might be the best of the collection were it not for the intrusive presence of Faith, who argues with Zagrowsky and smugly points out the moral, as if it weren't obvious enough.

At her best, Paley is able to dish up poetic and humorous slices of life oddly reminiscent of that most unfeminine writer, William Saroyan. Occasionally she even rises above this and achieves real simplicity and power, as with this excerpt from "The Immigrant Story": the narrator is telling about his father, who has left Poland for New York City, leaving his wife and three young sons to follow when he has found work.

> Meanwhile, in Poland famine struck. Not hunger, which all Americans suffer six, seven times a day, but Famine, which tells the body to consume itself. First the fat, then the meat, the muscle, then the blood. Famine ate up the bodies of the little boys pretty quickly. My father met my mother at the boat. He looked at her face, her hands. There was no baby in her arms, no children dragging at her skirt. She was not wearing her hair in two long black braids. There was a kerchief over a dark wiry wig. She had shaved her head, like a backward Orthodox bride, though they had been serious advanced socialists like most of the youth in their town. He took her by the hand and brought her home. They never went anywhere alone, except to work or the grocer's. They held each other's hand when they sat down at the table, even at breakfast.

But Paley inevitably follows up such fine writing with stories that are just plain silly, like "The Long-Distance Runner," in which Faith visits the Brighton Beach Building she grew up in (now in a black neighborhood) and is, improbably, taken in and protected for three weeks by a plucky welfare mother; or like "Northeast Playground," where eleven welfare mothers who have rejected their men bring their children to play: "What a wonderful calm unity in this group!" Faith gushes. Or like "Enormous Changes at the Last Minute," where an aging bourgeois woman and a cab driver/poet/musician/commune-dweller come together to make a baby and make a song; or like "Politics," where a group of neighborhood mothers sing a protest song to the Board of Estimates; or like "Listening," where Faith is devastated when a lesbian friend accuses her of having written only of heterosexual life and never about "my woman and woman, woman-loving life." It is this side of Grace Paley, unfortunately, that tips the scale of her collected works—the cockeyed optimist who too often lets her good intentions overpower her good writing.

So terribly correct

Richard Bernstein
Dictatorship of Virtue:
Multiculturalism and the Battle
for America's Future.
Knopf, 367 pages, $25

John Leo Two Steps Ahead
of the Thought Police.
Simon & Schuster, 319 pages, $22

reviewed by Terry Teachout

The response of the liberal establishment to the political-correctness movement has passed through three distinct phases to date.

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At first, liberals simply denied the existence of PC, leaving it to culture-conscious conservatives to document and decry it. Then they began reluctantly to acknowledge its existence, but invariably accompanied this acknowledgment with ritual attacks on alleged fanatics of both left and right. The current phase is in certain ways the most interesting of the three. There is now fairly general agreement among intellectuals of all ideological shades (lunatics excluded) that PC exists, that it is a purely left-wing phenomenon, and that its avowed purpose is to suppress open discussion of an increasingly wide range of subjects. Since free speech "up to and including the utmost limits of the endurable" (to borrow H. L. Mencken's phrase) has historically been central to the liberal credo, one would therefore assume, all things being equal, that the liberal establishment would have long since moved decisively against PC.

Instead, liberals as a group remain unsure of what to do, partly because they have learned that deviationists on the left are no less subject to discipline than heretics on the right (you can never be pure enough to please a zealot) and partly because the media have bought into PC in its most florid manifestations. Those who once lived by the editorial page of *The New York Times* now find themselves dying by the editorial page of *The New York Times*, a state of affairs more amusing in theory than in practice. I thus look forward with interest to future developments in the career of Richard Bernstein, a *Times* reporter who gave up a plum assignment as the paper's national cultural correspondent to write a book called *Dictatorship of Virtue: Multiculturalism and the Battle for America's Future*. My bet is that his next stop will be the obit desk, but who knows? There's always the Staten Island bureau.

If I sound a bit gloomy about Mr. Bernstein's prospects for advancement at an institution to which a *Times*person of my acquaintance habitually refers as "the death star," it's because his book is one of the most eloquent and uncompromising attacks ever made on PC. Not that regular readers of this journal will need much convincing, but then Richard Bernstein is not writing for us. He is after a different audience: good liberals who dismissed as ideologically tainted the anti-PC assaults of earlier writers like Roger Kimball and Dinesh D'Souza, but who nonetheless have begun discreetly to doubt. For such folk, *Dictatorship of Virtue* is likely to serve as a very cold douche indeed.

Mr. Bernstein gets down to brass tacks right from the start, producing this wonderfully apposite epigraph from Robespierre: "Terror is naught but prompt, severe, inflexible justice; it is therefore an emanation of virtue." Therein lies his theme: "We are not reexperiencing the French Revolution, and we are not in danger of the guillotine or rule by a national-level Committee of Public Safety (though I think subsequent pages show the existence of rather smaller versions of that committee). But we are threatened by a narrow orthodoxy—and the occasional outright atrocity—imposed, or committed, in the name of the very values that are supposed to define a pluralist society."

Mr. Bernstein identifies this orthodoxy as multiculturalism, thereby passing safely over the first *pons asinorum* of the PC debate: he recognizes that political correctness is a symptom rather than a disease. To dwell solely on the horror stories (horrible though they are) is to ignore the fact that they all arise from a particular world view. Some multiculturalists, to be sure, are diversity pimps pure and simple: "My experience leads me to believe that insofar as culture is involved in multiculturalism, it is not so much for me to be required to learn about other cultures as for me to be able to celebrate myself and for you to be required to celebrate me, and, along the way, to support my demand for more respect, more pride of place, more jobs, more foundation support, more money, more programs, more books, more prizes, more people like me in high places, a higher degree of attention."

But the multicultural program itself, as Mr. Bernstein recognizes, is deadly serious: "It is a code word for a political ambition, a yearning for more power, combined with

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a genuine, earnest, zealous, self-righteous craving for social improvement that is characteristic of the mentality of the post-1960s era in American life. . . . It is an ardently advocated, veritably messianic political program, and, like most political programs that have succumbed to the utopian temptation, it does not take kindly to true difference." And Mr. Bernstein also understands that stripped of their ideological finery, PC and multiculturalism are primarily about race:

> Indeed, a single-sentence summation of my theme would be this: multiculturalism as it is commonly formulated and practiced is the *dérapage* of the civil rights movement. . . . The plain and inescapable fact is that the derived Western European culture of American life produced the highest degree of prosperity in the conditions of the greatest freedom ever known on planet Earth. The rich and the advantaged of our society will survive even if they are taught to believe something different. But to teach the poor and the disadvantaged that they can ignore the standards and modes of behavior that have always made for success in American life is more than mere silliness. It is a lie.

There is, of course, nothing particularly original about this line of argument. Where Mr. Bernstein surprises is in his unapologetic tone. Though he writes as a liberal, he does so without any of the moist-eyed finger-crossing that so often disfigures such exercises in heterodoxy. Nowhere does he earnestly assure us that his step-mother was a card-carrying Communist, that he voted for Michael Dukakis *and* Walter Mondale, that he believes in raising the marginal tax rates to 110 percent. Nor does he indulge in the conservative-bashing that is no less *de rigueur* among liberals who have grown sick, tired, and scared of sensitivity fascism. (Robert Hughes, call your office.) Mr. Bernstein seems to think there are still a few people in the world who can be persuaded by logic buttressed by evidence—a refreshing approach, albeit one unlikely to win him many new friends at the *Times*.

Mr. Bernstein's evidence deserves a few words of its own. Much of what gets written about PC, especially by conservatives, smells of stale newspaper clippings. (One of the great weaknesses of conservative journalism is the fact that so much of it is second-hand.) Mr. Bernstein has left the clippings in the morgue and done his own legwork, presenting a rich assortment of carefully researched case histories: sensitivity training at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, freshman orientation at the University of Pennsylvania, the multiculturalization of the social-studies department of a Massachusetts high school, the shunning of a professor of English at the University of Texas.

By contrast, *Two Steps Ahead of the Thought Police*, John Leo's new collection of columns, mostly covers oft-tilled ground: speech codes, diversity management, Catharine MacKinnon, Robert Mapplethorpe, *The African-American Baseline Essays*, *Heather Has Two Mommies*, racial gerrymandering, date rape—PC's greatest hits, as it were. If you follow the conservative press with reasonably close attention, there won't be much of anything in Mr. Leo's book about which you haven't already heard.

The interesting thing about *Two Steps Ahead of the Thought Police* is not that it is derivative—collections of newspaper columns are derivative by definition—but that it exists at all. The pieces in this book were originally published in that most conventional of magazines, *U.S. News & World Report*, and subsequently distributed by Universal Press Syndicate to papers around the country, which paid, presumably happily, to reprint them. Similarly, Simon & Schuster, the publisher of *Two Steps Ahead of the Thought Police*, is a profit-making concern which doesn't waste a great deal of time with books its editors deem unlikely to sell well. (It is doubtless no coincidence that S&S also published Rush Limbaugh's two books and William Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*.)

All this is relevant because Mr. Leo's book, as its clever title suggests, is largely given over to attacks on PC. He is, indeed, the only

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syndicated columnist I know who devotes the bulk of his space to the sensitivity beat—most of the other right-of-center columnists spend much more time on traditional policy matters—and the fact that he is making a nice living doing so is both a good thing and a suggestive one. Good because what the PC debate has long needed is a popularizer, someone capable of explaining to the common reader the practical implications of disputes that not infrequently come across as more than a little bit *recherché*. People who don't use words like "phallocentric" in daily conversation are unlikely to take seriously people who do. The catch is that people who do often teach the children of people who don't, which is where people like John Leo come in. Suggestive because Mr. Leo's well-deserved success leads me to wonder if the tide of fashionable opinion might finally be turning against the crazies. *Two Steps Ahead of the Thought Police* pulls no punches whatsoever; it is utterly forthright on all aspects of PC, not excluding the racial ones.

Here, for example, is Mr. Leo on Brown University's "Third World Transition Program," in which "all nonwhite freshmen are invited to school three days early to meet and interact under the helpful ministrations of nonwhite advisors and teachers":

> The TWTP literature makes clear that the program aims at defining and unifying all available "Third Worlders" as nonwhites. One student gushes about the "special bonding that we as people of color share," and another about the "extra sensitivity" of nonwhites, although the exact nature of what students from Hong Kong and Harlem share in the sensitivity and bonding departments is left obscure. Oddly, it does not seem to occur to anyone at Brown that this is racist claptrap. Perhaps Vartan Gregorian, president of Brown and a famous in-group intellectual in New York, can explain this all to us. Or maybe whites should be hauled on campus early to make up that melanin-based sensitivity deficit.

Yet the important thing about this passage (which is representative of Mr. Leo's apply-club-A-to-head-B style) is not so much its bluntness as that it appears in a book fitted out with a foreword by none other than Peter Jennings, anchorman of ABC's "World News Tonight": "Whether he is dissecting political correctness, which he did long before most other people, or citing how the 'I am a victim' tendency has run amok in the land, whether he's writing about family values (he really has them) or taking on courts he believes are legislating social behavior, John's page in *U.S. News* is one of the most invigorating anywhere." Equally noteworthy is the presence on the dust jacket of blurbs by CBS correspondent Bernard Goldberg and gossip columnist Liz Smith. Do I smell a trend in the making? Is political incorrectness about to become . . . chic?

Passionate Porcupine

William Cobbett
Peter Porcupine in America: Pamphlets on Republicanism and Revolution. Edited by David A. Wilson. Cornell University Press, 288 pages, $29.95

reviewed by Richard Brookhiser

William Cobbett (1763–1835) is remembered as "Peter Porcupine," an English radical journalist of the first third of the nineteenth century. But in the last years of the eighteenth century, Cobbett had a try-out career as a political writer in the infant United States, where his politics, instead of being radical, were high Federalist. The only reason he was not an outright Tory was that it would have been impolitic for him to avow his true principles. David Wilson's selection from Peter Porcupine's American writings offers a window into the age of Federalism, and a warning to conservative journalists of what we can become if we surrender all integrity.

Any discussion of Cobbett's principles must take place between quotation marks. "I never was of an accommodating disposi-

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tion," he once wrote with uncharacteristic understatement, and his politics depended to an unusual degree on personalities and grudges. Cobbett was a Surrey farm boy who enlisted in the army in 1784. For seven years, he served with a regiment in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, rising to the rank of sergeant major. But promotion did not please him. "Those who were commanding me . . . were, in everything except mere authority, my inferiors; and ought to have been commanded by me." His officers were also guilty of peculation; Cobbett tried to get them court-martialed. He wrote a slashing, anonymous assault on the British army, and then, in 1792, he moved to the United States.

Two things pulled him to the right. Cobbett supported himself for some months by teaching English to French refugees, and like many Americans (and Englishmen), he became mesmerized by the Revolution. The bumptious Anglophobia of his new neighbors also made a belated patriot of him. Cobbett joined the conservative side in the fledgling two-party system with a 1794 attack on a fellow immigrant, the English scientist and Unitarian Joseph Priestley.

Over the next six years Cobbett's pamphlets and journalism found a large audience—at the crest of Federalism, the quasi-war with France in 1798, it was a very large audience—and there are some pleasures in reading him today. Cobbett wrote a clear, flowing prose, which could burst into spates of abuse. Here he is on Thomas McKean, a Pennsylvania Democratic politician.

> He beats his wife, and she beats him. . . . He is a notorious drunkard. The whole bar, one lawyer excepted, signed a memorial, stating, that so great a drunkard was he, that, *after dinner, person and property were not safe in Pennsylvania*. He has been horsewhipped in the City Tavern, and kicked in the street for his insolence to particular persons; and yet this degraded wretch is *Chief Justice of the State*!

Here are Democrats saluting the meddlesome French ambassador, Citizen Genet.

> The poor citizen had like to have shared the fate of the image of Abel on the church of our Lady of Loretto, which, we are told, is almost worn away by the ardent kisses of the Pilgrims. . . . very few parts, if any, of the Citizen's body, escaped a salute [and] he was licked as clean as a bear at three hours after being whelped.

He skewers eighteenth-century political correctness simply by reporting it. One teacher at the University of Pennsylvania, Cobbett tells us, improved the climax of Henry V's speech before Harfleur, from "Cry—God for Harry! England! and St. George!" to "Cry—God for Freedom! France! and Robespierre!" Another enthusiast, "having a wedding to announce, found himself at a stand when he came to the word *citoyenne*," and finally Englished it thus: "On ——, *Citizen* —— was married to *Citess* ——."

Cobbett's most effective rhetorical weapon is the *tu quoque*. The fact that all prominent southern Democrats were also slave-owners gave him many a clean shot. "Oh! happy Carolina! happy thrice Virginia! . . . After having spent the day in singing hymns to the Goddess of Liberty, the virtuous Democrat gets him home to his peaceful dwelling, and sleeps, with his *property* secure beneath his roof, yea, sometimes in his very *arms* . . ."

But Cobbett's polemical vigor is offset by his intellectual faults. A pamphlet arguing that the American government was threatened by a conspiracy of the United Irishmen reads like the mature work of Robert Welch. His bad judgment extended to his own writing: he claimed credit for the ratification of Jay's Treaty, leaving such conspicuous supporters of the pact as Fisher Ames, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington (to say nothing of the merits of the treaty itself) in the shade. But Cobbett's obtuseness is not surprising, since good political judgment depends on the capacity to assess without favor the forces at play. This capacity is related to a willingness to be forthright about one's own intentions, and Cobbett was anything but forthright. He

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began his American career by pretending to be a native, and when he finally came to write a memoir, he left out the episode of the court-martial. He professed to be a well-wisher to the American people, while calling them a "cheating, sly, roguish gang" in correspondence. A man who is disingenuous about himself has little motive to be consistent in other matters. Cobbett twitted Democrats for owning slaves, but he also accused them of planning to unleash blacks in a sans-culotte mob.

One useful service that Cobbett performs today is to remind us of the tenor of political life in the 1790s—a period that the historian Marshall Smelser has called "the Age of Passion." A generation later, Abraham Lincoln argued in his speech to the Springfield Lyceum that the worst passions of Americans in the founding period had been tamed to the service of the common good: ". . . the deep rooted principles of *hate*, and the powerful motive of *revenge* . . . were directed exclusively against the British nation. And thus, from the force of circumstances, the basest principles of our nature, were either made dormant, or to become the active agents in the advancement of the noblest of causes . . ." Perhaps this was true during the Revolutionary War (though we should not forget John Adams's guess that one third of the country was Tory). But once the United States was up and running, base principles flourished. During the 1790s, two congressmen fought on the floor of the House; a Senator was expelled from the Senate for treason; a Secretary of State was forced to resign under suspicion of treason. Anglophiles, like Hamilton, carried on private dealings with British diplomats while in government service; Francophile Democrats did the same with the French. Hamilton abused his enemies in anonymous essays in the papers; Jefferson, who was too cagey to write anything himself, kept a journalistic hatchetman on the State Department payroll. The election of 1800, which brought the Federalist period to a close, was certainly the most scurrilous in American history. (It did not bring the period *entirely* to a close: Hamilton's last duel with Aaron Burr, this one with pistols rather than politicking, was in 1804.)

Cobbett was a journalistic spirit fashioned expressly for the Age of Passion, but there were some who were even better suited to it than he. The second pamphlet in *Peter Porcupine in America* is an attack on James Callendar, a Scottish immigrant who had become a Democrat hack, but who later turned on his patrons and peddled the tale that Thomas Jefferson had had an affair with one of his slaves. The light from that nova is still traveling through the vacant spaces of the American mind. Every year dozens of tourists making the pilgrimage to Monticello ask to see where Sally Hemmings lived, all because of the brawls of the Founding Fathers and their minions.

Cobbett's American career fell to the passions of his enemies. In 1797, Cobbett accused Benjamin Rush, a prominent Philadelphia doctor and politician, of killing his patients during a yellow fever epidemic. (Rush was no quack, but the regimen he prescribed for yellow fever—multiple bloodlettings—was worthless.) Rush sued for libel. When the case came to trial in 1799, the governor of Pennsylvania was the aforementioned Thomas McKean; Rush's lawyer was McKean's nephew, and the presiding judge was one of McKean's friends. It was all as cozy as Little Rock. Cobbett was fined five thousand dollars, an enormous sum. He returned to England in 1800. Two years later, after a mob broke his windows because he refused to illuminate his house to celebrate the peace of Amiens, he returned to the left.

It is unfair to judge Cobbett entirely by his ideological gyrations. Great minds can change. What tells more strongly against him is the thinness of his arguments. It is true that scattered sentences of the American Peter Porcupine can sound like *Reflections on the Revolution in France*: Cobbett's "We want no improvement in religious knowledge; all we want is to practice, better, what we know" echoes Burke's "We know that *we*

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have made no discoveries, and we think that no discoveries are to be made, in morality." But the depth and passion of Burke's argument—which was also a kind of journalism—are missing from Cobbett's squibs.

Cobbett in America had the right take on the French Revolution, and on an American style of cant. But he did not much understand the country he so freely hectored. At one point, he tells his readers to spurn "the doctrine of equality as you would the poisoned chalice. . . . Would you sow the seeds of envy, hatred, robbery, and murder? Would you break all the bands of society asunder, and turn a civilized people into a horde of savages?" One understanding of the doctrine of equality had accomplished something much like that in France. But might there not be other understandings? Jefferson wrote that all men were created equal, and this was no private fancy of his but rather a resolution of the Continental Congress, endorsed by such future Federalists as John Adams and George Washington. This might have been food for thought, if Cobbett had not been too excited to think.

Shorter notices

John Tyrrell, editor & translator
Intimate Letters:
Leoš Janáček to Kamila Stösslová.
Princeton University Press, 397 pages, $35

Intimate Letters: Leoš Janáček to Kamila Stösslová is a generous selection from Janáček's letters to his Immortal Beloved, along with a few of her replies. Slogging through these *billets doux-amers* is not always easy. But once read, they are a rewarding subject for extensive speculation about the role romantic love plays in an artist's creativity, and about whether sustained passion in anyone's life depends on its remaining unconsummated.

For eleven years the great Czechoslovak composer loved, adored, and panted for the much younger Kamila Stösslová. They met at the Luhačovice spa in 1917, when he was sixty-three and she twenty-six, and were parted only by his death in 1928. Both were married, and never seem to have come close to being what we today mean by "lovers." Yet Kamila, too, felt something genuine for Leoš, while he kept dreaming of their future marriage and children. Kamila had two boys by her husband, David, an antiques dealer; Janáček and his wife, Zdenka, had lost both their children, after which their marriage, never all that good, completely deteriorated. The Stössel marriage is harder to assess.

David and Kamila were both Jewish, and very middle-class; their puritanical background and socially insecure position would have made them cling to each other that much more stubbornly. The young Kamila was in love with her husband, though his always being away on business trips made that love turn sour. Yet there is no evidence that she would ever have divorced him to marry Leoš. And even had she wanted to, the then Czech laws might have made such a marriage difficult, if not impossible. The bridegroom would have been seventy-five at least, which, along with the prerequisite of two divorces and Janáček's flaunting whatever relationship he and Kamila previously had, would have set tongues wagging wildly. The conventional Kamila, who went into a prolonged tizzy when a relative of Janáček's gossiped, would hardly have dared take the plunge.

There are two problems with this correspondence. Because of Zdenka's jealousy, and at Kamila's insistence, Leoš burned many of his beloved's letters. She, in turn, destroyed some (preserving only the envelopes), cut whole pages or smaller sections out of others, or simply inked out anything from single words to several lines. It is safe to say that what is missing is "the good parts"; but also some harmless passages that were in the verso of the sticky ones. The other problem is that what remains is limited in range and boundlessly repetitious.

Janáček and Stösslová saw each other only briefly and infrequently during those eleven years. She and her husband visited with the Janáčeks in Brno; or Leoš, without Zdenka, would stay with the Stössels in distant Písek.

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Or, later on, Kamila, with or without David, would come to Prague for a Janáček opera or concert. And there was a bit of joint summering at Luhačovice. But it all amounted to very little. John Tyrrell, the excellent translator and editor, has provided a table of the meetings and their duration, and of whether they were *tête-à-têtes* or chaperoned. It's all in the text, of course, but the chart makes it more salient and poignant.

Kamila, like other women of her time and class, was poorly educated and barely literate. This did not bother the deeply enamored composer, especially as she had humor and common sense, but it did contribute to his writing very little about his artistic and intellectual concerns. So, for the nonmusical Kamila, avid reader of popular romances, Janáček's letters were pretty much confined to outpourings of love and laments about how much he missed his lady or regretted the platonic nature of their friendship. And, of course, the trivia of daily life. Now, since the preserved missives number 697, and most are reprinted or summarized here, monotony sometimes sets in. Not even the greatest epistolarian—or composer—could sustain that many variations on a single theme.

And yet, because Janáček was also an accomplished journalist, these letters are writerly as well as effusive: sometimes lyrical, always deeply felt, and often droll. And that all but one or two of Janáček's greatest compositions were directly inspired by Kamila makes these letters required reading for any true Janáčekian. But what a melancholy thought that, in the end, the Muse turned Angel of Death.

When Kamila came to stay with Leoš at his country house in Hukvaldy in August 1928, she seems to have been ready for some sex. But, at Janáček's suggestion, she brought along her younger son, who, during an excursion, vanished into the woods. The rascal blithely showed up that evening, but not until Leoš, searching for him, had caught a chill that led to pneumonia and death. True, Kamila was lovingly at his bedside to the last, but what further masterpieces could have come from this genius cut off in the bloom of his youthful old age. Alas, the Muse giveth and taketh away.

—*John Simon*

Claude Rawson
Satire and Sentiment, 1660–1830.
Cambridge University Press,
309 pages, $64.95

Distinguished scholar Claude Rawson's *Satire and Sentiment, 1660–1830*, amounts to a survey of what might be called social and socially-placing tones of voice in comic English literature of its period. The book, about half of which started life as discrete reviews, aims to hit "stress points, rather than to provide a progressive narrative." First, Rawson finds in the Restoration grandee Rochester a lordly ease in obscenity lacking in the socially insecure Oldham; he notes, too, that "Rochester, Laforgue, and Eliot, all wrote, while still in their twenties, portraits of men suffering or affecting an elderly sexual debility, though the refined timidities and wilting sadness of Prufrock differ greatly from the thrusting ostentation of [Rochester's] Disabled Debauchee."

The central essay deals with the relation of mock-heroic (Augustan and Romantic) to the heroic epic's central concern, war. Dryden and Pope, in their mocks of and in their translations from ancient epic, shy away from war, in conformity with the pacifist sentiments of the age; the *Dunciad*, he notes, "uses every rhetorical routine associated with classical or Miltonic epics, including an Odyssean or Aenean journey from East to West, a visit to the underworld, and a parody of heroic sports. But there is no fighting." Swift, who *does* excoriate the gruesomeness of war, eschews the mock-heroic. There was an Augustan embarrassment, an *aporia*, an "inverse anxiety of influence" here: Homer and Virgil were untouchable idols, but their very matter was deeply suspect. (I think Rawson underestimates the extent to which war was suspect to Homer and Virgil themselves, however.) The great

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Romantic satirists Shelley and Byron, who, Rawson characteristically notes, "possessed a patrician status that Dryden, Swift, and Pope all lacked," are openly contemptuous of ancient bloodthirstiness and "treat the epic with a frivolity and a lightness that would be unthinkable in Pope."

In another virtuoso essay, Rawson teases out the implications—philosophical, sexual, political, social—of the famous lament of Burke about the treatment of Marie Antoinette: "But now all is to be changed. . . . All the decent drapery of life is to be torn off." That word *drapery* ("drapery, not dress"), with its insistance that civilization is a deliberate, artificial construct, has parallels in conservative aesthete Reynolds and antitheses in Blake and Paine.

The last essay in the book, Rawson's introduction to the Oxford World Classics edition of Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, takes a remarkably fresh look at the affiliations of Austen's language. He agrees that she was a pioneer of free indirect speech, a mode that "combines the ostensibly factual reporting of speech and thought with complex and shifting intimations of judgemental perspective," but insists that she owes such pervasive linguistic habits as a fondness for comic triads to Henry Fielding. "In both Austen and Fielding the impression emerges not of an actual conversation faithfully recorded by a self-effacing narrator, but of a stylised anecdotal performance, bringing out the preposterous and the comically habitual." Of course, Austen, especially perhaps in the delicate *Persuasion*, far transcends Fielding's "bouncy parade of omniscience", but in her satirico-psychological notation Austen was as much heir to Fielding as she was precursor of Flaubert and Joyce. (What she got from her beloved Richardson was merely the moral rectitude of her male heroes.)

Claude Rawson is himself an Augustan among critics, expressing worlds of scholarship with a pungent and delightful humanism. He writes in a prose full of epigrammatic eloquence and exempt from specialist jargons. It is only to be wished that he undertake—in the spirit of, say, Erich Auerbach or C. S. Lewis—a comprehensive work on the great English age of satire and sentiment that would address the general literate public. He might find the task a concentrating and liberating one.

—Donald Lyons

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Notebook

Against the dehumanization of art

by Mark Helprin

As a junior in college in 1968 (A.D.), I succumbed to a popular rage and bought a book by Ortega y Gasset. It was Ortega's fate to have Bobby Kennedy think that his middle initial was Y, for which Kennedy was mocked by the same people who, though of the opinion that Robert McNamara was the chief engineer of a war of genocide in Southeast Asia, said at Cambridge dinner parties that, because he read Yeats, he was "really a good guy."

Though *The Dehumanization of Art* was perfectly positioned to be the darling of the intellectuals—it was a university press paperback, it was by an author of a foreign name that Bobby Kennedy couldn't pronounce, it was cheap, and it was short—I bought it because I assumed it would be a defense of art and an attack upon dehumanization. Why else would anyone have written a book called *The Dehumanization of Art*?

But I was shocked to discover that it was a spirited endorsement of the principles that I had expected it to condemn. In fact, it was in some ways the Gettysburg Address of Modernism: as an erudite and magnanimous capitulation of the old to the young, it seemed to the generation of 1968 to have been both wise and noble.

Though first published in Spain in 1925, it had in the Sixties an air of being bravely at the forefront of changes to which only foolish reactionaries might object. Strangely enough, it has that air even today, when everything in it has been leaden orthodoxy for nearly a hundred years. In art as in politics, entrenched institutions with an affinity for survival give off the scent of revolution even as they sustain a suffocating order. Like the oxymoronic *Institutionalized Revolutionary Party*, which for most of this century has rigged every election and tightened every cap on every tube of toothpaste in Mexico, the conscious adherents of modernism (most are unconscious) like to think that they are revolutionaries.

Expressed by Ortega seven decades ago, their program is "to dehumanize art . . . to avoid living forms . . . to consider art as play and nothing else . . . to be essentially ironical . . . to regard art as a thing of no transcending consequence." This is pretty much how things stand today, except that in emptying the nest of morality the theorists made room for the political cuckoos to lay their intractable eggs, and the great exception to the rule of no transcending consequence is that art may be the abject slave of the political craze (and I mean craze) of the moment.

I myself was almost a convert to the idea of dehumanization, not because it appealed to me intellectually but rather because I had had a very lonely upbringing and was infatuated with nature. To the playwright William Alfred, who was my tutor in English,

This essay was first presented as the Duncan Phillips Lecture, under the auspices of the Phillips Collection, at the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C., on May 25, 1994.

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I proposed the idea of a novel, set in the Galápagos, absent either humans or anthropomorphized animals. It would be about lava, steam, waves, wind, the sky, colors, temperatures, scents, tides, rocks: much like the Yiddish theater.

He told me that I couldn't get away with it, and despite my citation of Melville's "Encantadas" (which, not coincidentally, takes place in the Galápagos), he ran through his vast store of knowledge and laid down the law: literature, he said, has to be about people. Backed up against a wall, I offered to throw in a tortoise, but he was implacable, and for very good reason.

Art that imitates the rigor of science forgoes an infinite wealth of variables that pure nature, in its constancy and nobility, does not present, for if man is more limited in his capacities he is more interesting in his unpredictability. Art that accepts human limitations is empowered and enriched by the very discipline that the modernists ignore.

For example, the Hofburg and the Astrodome each are of immense volume, but the Hofburg is apportioned to human scale. Whereas the Astrodome makes its single point in a minute, you can wander for years in the Hofburg. This is because we are of a certain size. Certain proportions are right for us, while others are not. Modernism has forgotten this, forgotten that we cannot survive at certain temperatures, that we disintegrate at certain speeds, that we cannot fit in some spaces or fill others, that our understanding is tethered to our mortality, that part of what we call art is the tempering of ideas and notions by the facts of our existence and the existence of our limitations.

Because an 800-page novel about quarks and leptons would be even deadlier than that all-time champion of somnolence, *The Cambridge History of Iran*, it is relatively easier to impeach the practice of dehumanization in literature than in the fine arts or in music, where art and design run so closely together. But though the modern convention makes little or no distinction between art and design, there is a vast difference between them. As the principles of modernism, like a lawn chemical, are fatal to one and not the other, there is now a lot more design than art. Taking a cue from Congress (which knows in its bones that politics is nomenclature), we call the design floating around all over the place art.

To wit, as the lawyers say, within every great painting you can find startling abstractions—wave-like flows, juxtapositions of color, expressive patterns and the shattering of patterns, stirring contrasts, hypnotic forms, etc. But within even the most magnificent abstractions you cannot find great paintings. In every Raphael there are a hundred million de Koonings. In de Kooning there is not a single Raphael. You can break a $10,000 Federal Reserve Certificate into a million pennies, but you cannot, from a penny, make a $10,000 bill.

I have just spoken an immense heresy in this age of relativism: that some things can be better than others, that ways exist to assess value, that in life there is somehow an absolute standard. Though the entire cultural apparatus may deny the existence of an absolute standard, though the universities, the philosophers, the newspapers, and eventually, perhaps, every single human being on earth may deny that it exists . . . it does, nonetheless, exist.

The closest we may have come to approaching it within the framework of reason is in our understanding of the unalterable speed of light, which (as the prime meridian is to longitude or the meter stick in Paris is to the meter) is the fundamental starting point for all the workings in proportion that make both art and design. Think of painting as variations in the wave-lengths of light (color) and the spacing between forms, or of music as variations and combinations of vibrations-per-second and the spacing between them. My point is not that these things are of value in themselves but that there is an order to things and that they are the markers and tools of that order.

Modernism is by necessity obsessed with form, much like a craftsman obsessed with

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his tools and materials. In my climbing days we used to call people like that "equipment weenies." These days you can see it in fly-fishing, where not a few people go out once a year with $5,000-worth of equipment to catch (maybe) $5-worth of fish. What should have been the story of the man, the stream, and the fish becomes instead a romance between the man and his tools. In this century the same thing happened in art. Just as they who would deny the existence of the soul will perforce worship the body, those who do not immediately know the difference between art and design are those who would confuse and equate a sailfish levitated above windblown waves with a reconstruction of its stiff and motionless skeleton in a natural history museum.

Because the doctrine of reason, despite its obvious inapplicability to the most important and vexing questions, excludes that which is outside of it, the derivative pattern in the arts has been a war-like campaign of rejection and extermination. It will be autonomically assumed in certain quarters that I am rejecting all of what is mistakenly called modern art. Quite to the contrary, I love much of it. Unlike my wife, I think one of the great splendors of life is to have as the centerpiece of an otherwise impeccably classical room a breathtaking abstract painting. Has there ever been a great painter who fails to see the power in pure color and pure form? I think not. But has there ever been a great painter who surrenders to it entirely? I say no, that this is design—which is fine, which is not art, which is why we have a word for each one. About this the dictionary is clear: design is "the combination of details which go to make up a work of art."[1] Ortega's dehumanization, which you may also read as *devitalization*, would turn all art into design, and, to a large extent, it has. The heart of his theory is that we view reality by means of concepts, and that we should jettison realities. What he recommended, and what, after seventy years, we've got, is music without sound, singing without voice, paintings without paint, literature without words, and cooking without food. In the old days when there were insane asylums this was what went on in them. Now the locus has shifted to the universities, the world of the "arts," and the claptrap government bureaucracies that exist so that arts turkeys may give arts turkeys to arts turkeys.

Whether you write the checks or cash them you know almost instinctively that in Ortega's world money chases novelty. To cite Ortega, one is "much more likely to fail if he insists on composing another Wagnerian opera, another naturalistic novel," because, "In art repetition is nothing." By that logic, all of Wagner's operas but his first would be failures of repetition, as would Mozart's piano concerti after number one, Beethoven's symphonies after the first, and so on. The discovery of Beethoven's tenth would, of course, be a yawn. A singer with the voice of Caruso would have to go back to making pepperoni in Civitavecchia. And someone who could paint like Michelangelo would just have to eat his heart out at the Whitney watching videotapes of cross-dressing chimpanzees (that is, if the Whitney were in a conservative period).

Modernism is obsessed with originality. As Ortega says, "The poet aggrandizes the world by adding to reality . . . the contents of his imagination." Until very recently the task of the artist was to work with what was given, to pay homage to God and nature, the presumption being that though he would never achieve perfection he could approach it through the various disciplines that make use of what is already in the universe, of which there is plenty. At his boldest, the artist would, in the language of Broadway, do another take on what God had already created. Never would he presume actually to create, not only because it would be unpardonable vanity but because it would be ridiculous.

Artists have now been laboring for generations under the mistaken assumption that they are aggrandizing reality when in fact they merely have been distorting it.

1 *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Third Edition.*

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Operating on the presumption that one can be a god leads very quickly to sterility, and though an entire cultural apparatus may be primed to say it isn't so, what is sterile is sterile, and eventually you know.

In presuming to create a new universe while on a two-month sabbatical at the American Academy in Rome (while at the same time going to the beach, starting a new love affair, searching for the perfect restaurant, sitting in the bar all afternoon, and sleeping fourteen hours a day), the artist not only sets himself a task at which he is bound to fail, but he relinquishes the potent common language that artists have used for thousands of years, the language that reaches across barriers of class, nationality, or belief, the language of natural and human constants: the imperturbable conditions of light, the replicable and exact ladders of pitch, the universal existence of love and sorrow and courage and death and sacrifice, the impulse to succor and protect children, the certainty and surprise of color, the beauty of form, both human and natural. In forswearing these, the artist forswears the world.

Have I made myself clear? Not yet. Keep in mind that the presumption that the artist can *create* is the twin of the proposition that nothing matters, that the universe operates without consequence or meaning. Briefly stated and without evangelical impulse, if God does not exist and neither does His order, then we are all free to do as we wish, to make our own order, and the one that prevails will simply be the one that can marshall the greatest power. This, the rule of force, is the legacy of nihilism, which is the gift of the belief that the universe is devoid of purpose. Modernism is rooted in these ideas, its developments are channeled and limited by them, and it is no coincidence that modernism has been and is yet the handmaiden of this century's matchless forces of destruction and alienation.

Ortega was a civilized man, a learned man, an art critic. But listen to his contempt for those who have not learned the system of the new art, in which each artist must describe the idiosyncratic rules of what he believes is the new reality he has just manufactured.

> The new art . . . divides the public into the two classes of those who understand it and those who do not. . . . One group possesses an organ of comprehension denied to the other. . . . They are two different variations of the human species. . . . The new art addresses itself . . . to a specially gifted minority [and] . . . compels the average citizen to realize that he is just this . . . a creature incapable of receiving the sacrament of art, blind and deaf to pure beauty. . . . Like horses and mules that lack understanding . . . the masses kick and do not understand.

After "the purification of art," when

> human content has grown so thin that it is negligible . . . we then have an art which can be comprehended only by people possessed by the peculiar gift of artistic sensibility—an art for artists and not for the masses, for "quality" and not for hoi polloi.

If you refuse to sign on, you're in trouble. Why? Because "In art . . . we have to accept the imperative imposed by the time. Obedience to the order of the day is the most hopeful choice open to the individual."

Ortega praises the modern artist for "brazenly . . . deforming reality, shattering it . . . dehumanizing it." The violence of his figures of speech—"blown up . . . burned . . . locked up"—escalates.

> The weapon of poetry turns against natural things and wounds or murders them. . . . The young artist cares less for the startling . . . than for the human aspect which he destroys. . . . For the modern artist, aesthetic pleasure derives from a triumph over human matter. That is why he has to drive home the victory by presenting in each case a strangled victim.

That this was one of the signal banners of the Lost Generation and then the generation of 1968 is not surprising. But Ortega was a

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man of the nineteenth century. He was still able to contrast the new age that he praised with the old order against which he bore a pathological grudge.

"It may be said," he writes, "that the new art has so far [1925] produced nothing worthwhile, and I am inclined to think the same . . . [but] who knows what may come of this budding style? There is no turning back." By 1925 the principles of modernism were set in stone. Nothing would be produced subsequently that would have startled Ortega given what he had already seen. The great harvest of modernism was yet to come, but it would come in a different form, in a form suggested by Ortega's "strangled victim."

What is most astonishing is that Ortega was on to the whole enterprise. Listen to his betrayal of its purposes: "It is not an exaggeration," he says, "to assert that modern paintings and sculpture betray a real loathing of living forms or forms of living beings. . . . Dehumanization . . . is inspired by . . . an aversion against the traditional interpretation of realities. . . . To assail all previous art, what else can it mean than to turn against Art itself?"

He was not just aware, he was prescient. In the midst of this extraordinary *volte face*, he sees ahead with the same clarity, though not with the felicity, of the Henry James essay "Beyond the Rim." For he recognizes that "hatred of art is unlikely to develop as an isolated phenomenon; it goes hand in hand with hatred of science, hatred of State, hatred in sum, of civilization as a whole."

And then, after this startling admission, Ortega does something extraordinary, something comparable in my view to *il gran rifiuto* of Pope Celestine V, but far darker and of much greater consequence. After stumbling upon the conclusion that the argument he has been endorsing will in fact destroy art, destroy civilization, he simply says: "This is the moment prudently to lay down one's pen and let a flock of questions take off on their winged course."

But this was absolutely not the moment to put down the pen. It was not the moment when "obedience to the order of the day" was the most hopeful choice for the individual. For not only was the "flock of questions" not asked by those who should have asked and answered them, but when Ortega put down his pen up jumped Franco, and Mussolini, and Hitler, and Stalin. And the fruit of the dehumanization that Ortega correctly perceived and incorrectly championed was a century of a hundred million dead in war, holocaust, and purge, and the general degradation of art and life in which the living and imperfect form of man has been forced into the iron maiden of rationalism, there to suffer, wilt, and die. The abstract play of ideas did, after all, have consequences. It was consequential for the paratroopers who were machine-gunned as they floated to earth, for the cities that were ground to rubble, for the millions of mothers and children who were murdered in the camps, and for whole families that perished in seas of fire, because those whose first responsibility it had been to check nihilism and dehumanization had instead embraced them.

With the rise of science, the industrial state, and super-efficient social organization, aspects of culture that had been evolving for millennia according to distinct humanistic principles were pressed to abandon those principles in favor of various rationalistic systems; from modernism to Marxism. That which was humane proved also to have been surprisingly defenseless, and was rather quickly overpowered. Modernism is the movement that arose in art to collaborate with the conqueror, and most of today's artists and theorists, the thinking and unthinking acolytes of Ortega and his precursors, are the collaborators.

The difference between Ortega and so many that followed is that he knew. Why did he capitulate so readily? He did so (among other reasons) because he had been convinced that history had run itself out, and that the final discovery was that we have been born from nothingness into nothingness and will exit into nowhere. If that is

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true then he was right and there are no possible alternatives to the system to which he bent his knee. But, without entering the realm of theology, it is *logically* apparent in the language of reason and science (the language in which he makes his argument and in which we read the course of modern times) that no one has answered the fundamental questions upon which his argument depends absolutely on the answer of "*nihil*."

The careless adherents of modernism did not understand the glories—and therefore the limitations—of science. Science is not predictive, it is descriptive: of nature. It has yet to supply a single answer to a single eschatological question, and has never been pressed to do so except in the hands of those who do not understand it.

The alternative course that Ortega and his generation mistakenly thought could not be taken, because they naïvely credited so much to the powers of reason, is that, without the illusion of a dead end, art would continue to take new paths, as it has, always, and that none of them would lead to nowhere.

Not long ago, art and civilization took a horribly wrong and mistaken turn. My proof of this is not merely the contrast between this and other ages of art but the unparalleled devastation of this century—by war, by mass bondage, by the neglect of what is humane. In arrogating to ourselves powers that we did not have or that we could not handle, we have been the cause of untold suffering and destruction.

Though it cannot be undone, it can be left behind. In the long sweep of history a hundred years or two hundred years is not too open an oxbow to be closed, not too big a wound to be healed, not too wide a chapter to end. Nor would a return to where we left off be a sterile revisiting of old ground: it would be, rather, like a blind man regaining his sight. Imagine, for example, the richness that might come of a generation of painters, steeled by the hard truths of recent history, who taught themselves once again to paint the human form and to render light in its infinite and consequential beauty. Imagine if American painters were to begin where Homer, Eakins, Sargent, and The Eight left off. Imagine if writers stopped going to writers' school, and if composers actually composed music. The modernists will tell you that this is impossible, that God is dead, that art is dead, that the fields are run out.

But the fields are not run out. And they never will be.

When I was in the army, many years ago, I was an infantryman, and in the course of what I saw, and did, and came to understand, I was broken. Sometime after I had returned to the United States and my life had resumed, I rounded a corner in the Metropolitan Museum in New York and saw a painting I had known all my life but which I had not until that moment been able to understand. This was Winslow Homer's masterfully restrained portrait of a veteran returning to his fields. The generation touched by fire in the Civil War understood the great import of this painting, they knew why the veteran had his back turned to the painter, why he was alone, why he worked in utter quiet, why the light was so clear, the scene so tranquil. After years of war and destruction, they understood, and after having passed this painting for the first time as a man, so did I.

As if there had never been a Gettysburg, an Antietam, or a Chancellorsville, the light struck the soil and the wheat grew. The world was the same. The essential rules had not changed. Devastation had not triumphed. The veteran could return to his fields, and the answer to his tentativeness was that, as if by a miracle, they were now even richer than he had remembered them.

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ADELPHI UNIVERSIT
EDUCATION FOR
THE 21st CENTURY.
A.D. OR B.C.
The best way to prepare for the modern world is not to prepare for it.
Now that's fine for us to say, here in our ivory towers above the tree line in Garden City. But what if you?
How will you earn a living after four years exposure at Adelphi to the development and grandeur of Western Civilization?
How will you compete for spots in law school and medical school and MBA programs after devoting untold semester hours to Aristotle, Plato, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Shakespeare, Dante, Locke and Kant?
How will you discover yourself? Adelphi's curriculum is geared not directly to helping you discover ethics and logic and rhetoric and music and art and dance and drama and history and above all ideas?
How indeed? Well, if you know answer as well as we do, you're the kind of student. And Adelphi is the kind of university, whether your future major is accounting or biology or social work or pre-law or education or physics or math or marketing or whatever.
We invite you to send for more information about Adelphi. It comes in two forms: our straight, yet lively brochure and our contemporary, crystal clear video.
We'll send both if you call (800) DUCCLNXVII-MMMI, or call the number below.
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AD #1 "ONE OF AMERICA'S GREAT NOVELISTS WROTE TO COMPLAIN THAT HE HAD TO HAVE THE AD'S DUPLICATED BECOUSE HE COULDN'T BE SAID. FIGURE OUT WHAT WE WERE SELLING HE THOUGHT. MAYBE ARISTOTLE."
WHY THE MOST INTERESTING UNIVERSITY IN THE COUNTRY STOOPS SO LOW AS TO ADVERTISE ITSELF
AD #2 "THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY'S LEADERS, ALL ADVERTISING AGE, ATTACKED WITH ADVERTISING IRREVERENTLY."
DOES ANYBODY
NEED AN EDUCATIO
THIS GOOD?
Once, it could be argued that you didn't need an education such as we are talking about here.
The job market was a seller's market. You could study management, for example, and manage quite successfully by managing– because, well, the world was looking for managers.
But today, tomorrow, and the 21st century present a very different set of demands for ourselves and for our children.
A liberal education, once thought too lofty–for its commitment to ideas, to the acquisition of knowledge, to the development of critical intelligence, and to the willingness to ask fundamental questions and derives unsettling answers–by students seeking professional careers, is now at the forefront of their needs, and for very practical reasons.
In a competitive and turbulent global environment, where no job is ever secure and no title can tell you what a position requires, the idea of expertise must include such old-fashioned attributes as versatility, imagination, reliability, and inventiveness.
And we have designed the Core Curriculum at Adelphi to focus on exactly these traditional commitments. The Adelphi
THE ADELPHI CORE CURRICULUM
FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM
Freshman Year
The Modern Condition I & II
Origins of the Modern Condition I & II
Core Composition
Five Elective Courses
Sophomore Year
Two Courses in Modes and Versions of Knowledge (The Second Tier of the Core Curriculum)*
Eight Major and Elective Courses
Junior Year
Three Courses in Modes and Versions
Seven Major and Elective Courses
Senior Year
Senior Seminar: In Values and Actions
Nine Major and Elective Courses
*Modes and Versions Courses are distributed across three interdisciplinary categories: The Natural World, Art and Expression, and Society and Culture
Core is a four-year, thirty-five credit, open ended but coherent inquiry into the issues origins, achievements, and difficulties of the modern condition. Its aim is not so much pass on an agreed-upon parcel of knowledge as it is to illuminate the central problems and explore the fundamental controversies our age and its endlessly refined informatio
The Adelphi Core consequently represents, according to Adelphi President Peter Diamandopoulos, "Our faith in our students' abilities– beyond their interests, their backgrounds, their secondary education–to comprehend difficult ideas, to hazard testing their own ideas, and to trans learning and thought into cho and action in their own lives.
This is part of the University answer to the anticipated ques tion about the Adelphi Curriculum: does everybody need an education this good. We say no, everybody doesn't need an education this good. this radical? this radical– only your congressman, your doctor, your lawyer, your business partner, your accountant, your daughter, your son, yourself.
ADELPHI UNIVERSI

WHAT HAS ALL THIS

Five years ago, Adelphi began an advertising campaign that sought to raise basic question about higher education in today's world.

Sometimes we used irony to do that, and sometimes we managed to irritate even our be friends, because we did not believe a serious subject need always be approached solemnly.

Yet, at their center, those advertisements reflected a very serious commitment o Adelphi's part to address difficult questions and to hazard imaginative answers – with ou Core Curriculum, with our Society of Mentors, and with an educational philosophy that brin the traditions and powers of intellect to bear on the disquieting world facing today's student

We at Adelphi believe we have the seriousness and boldness required to accomplish wh many educators and commentators claim is an impossible task – truly educating today's stu dents, teaching them not only what they must know, but what matters; teaching them th

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HARVARD. THE ADELPHI OF MASSACHUSETTS.

Believe it or not, Harvard actually lives up to this reputation.

Its academic mission is every bit as lofty as Adelphi's: to develop the whole man and the whole woman; to expose students to liberal learning, the 2500-year tradition of Western Civilization; to prepare you for life, not just to occupy your mind for the years between high school and post-pubescence.

Its location in Cambridge, just across the river from Boston, may not promise the Museum of Modern Art, Lincoln Center, Broadway, or the United Nations. But it holds its own against Adelphi's campus, which is less than an hour from New York City.

And don't overlook Harvard's extracurriculars: its century-old clubs and organizations are the stuff of legend, along the lines of the Adelphi athletic department. No less than three Adelphi Panther teams currently hold rankings in the national top ten.

For more information about Harvard, the Adelphi of Massachusetts, call (617) 495-1551.

For a brochure and video about Adelphi, the Adelphi of New York, call (516) 663-1100. You'll also receive a free "Harvard, the Adelphi of Massachusetts" t-shirt. But hurry. As they say in advertising, supplies are limited.

ADELPHI UNIVERSITY

Garden City, New York 11530. (516) 663-1100. For application materials and a video, write or call.

THERE ARE THREE THINGS EVERYONE SHOULD READ BEFORE ENTERING COLLEGE:

PLATO'S REPUBLIC, THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ARISTOTLE, AND THIS AD.

Not so fast.

If you think you can get away with ignoring the first two works and get right into this ad, stop. Rip this page out and stick it in your sock drawer.

Don't read this ad until you've first savored Plato. And discovered Aristotle, if not the complete works at least the incomplete collection, maybe the *Ethics* or the *Politics*.

Then you'll be able to deal with the Madison Avenue manipulators who market universities the same way they market sausages or deodorant soap.

Your mind will then be keen enough to dismiss the vapid slogans that university marketers conjure up to attract you, the consumers, who enter the education marketplace each spring. Slogans also designed to soothe the parents whose checks enter the universities' treasuries each autumn.

Used to be a school's slogan would be a nice Latin phrase such as *lux et veritas* or *semper paratus* or *ut omnes te cognoscant*. Now we get corporate gobbledy-gook like: People making successful people ever more successful, successfully.

If you're heading for business school, for example, you'll not only note the obvious: how many successful graduates in all fields that Adelphi can point to. You'll also investigate what you can learn at Adelphi besides LIFO, FIFO, and the other Principles of Accounting. What is it that a liberal arts environment imparts that a trade school can't?

The same is true of the psychology student or the communications major. Or the pre-law and pre-med students who are, after all, students of the Arts and Sciences, respectively.

When you visit our school, ask to see a dean, even the President. (The President of Adelphi still teaches his philosophy class every Thursday at 5:10 PM. If you drop in with an inquiring mind, he'll welcome you, albeit argument actively.)

The premise of Adelphi is that all students (whether of nursing, psychology, business, the humanities, the physical sciences, education, the fine arts) deserve the opportunity to enrich themselves by exposure to ideas.

Now: will your day-to-day involvement in those ideas make you a better investment banker? Or social worker? Or lawyer? Or high school teacher? Or nurse? Or statesman? Or accountant? Or psychologist? Or doctor? Does a liberal education make a difference in one's ability to make a living in 20th Century America, not to mention 21st Century America?

Yes. And we believe a profound difference. It has done that for 2,500 years in every corner of the world. It will be no less efficacious today in the Western Hemisphere, in the United States, on Long Island, 45 minutes from Manhattan and a five-block stroll from the Nassau Blvd. station of the Long Island Railroad.

Now that you've removed this ad from your sock drawer, there are three more things to do before entering college. One: give us a call. Two: read our publications and look at our video. And three: visit our campus and say hello.

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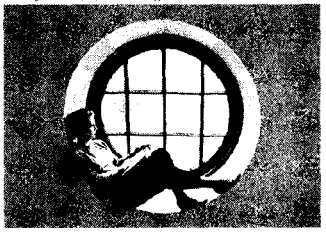
Garden City, NY 11530. (516)663-1100. For application materials and a video, write or call

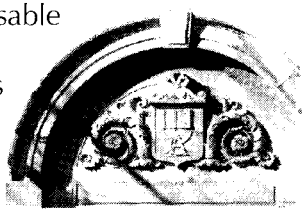


BEEN LEADING TO?

habit of reflection, the ability to discriminate, the love of learning and beauty; and teaching them, too, the practical knowledge indispensable or professional life.

And so, we have founded a new school, a college that takes he promises and commitments of those early advertisements and he successful programs that lay behind them to a new stage. oon we will begin placing a series of advertisements that celebrate and explain this innovative venture.

This new college is called the Honors College at Adelphi. For nore information, call 1-800-ADELPHI. And watch this space for ur new advertising campaign.



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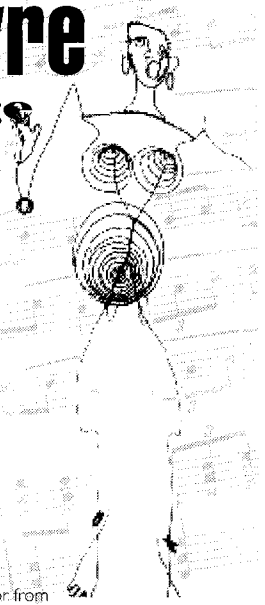

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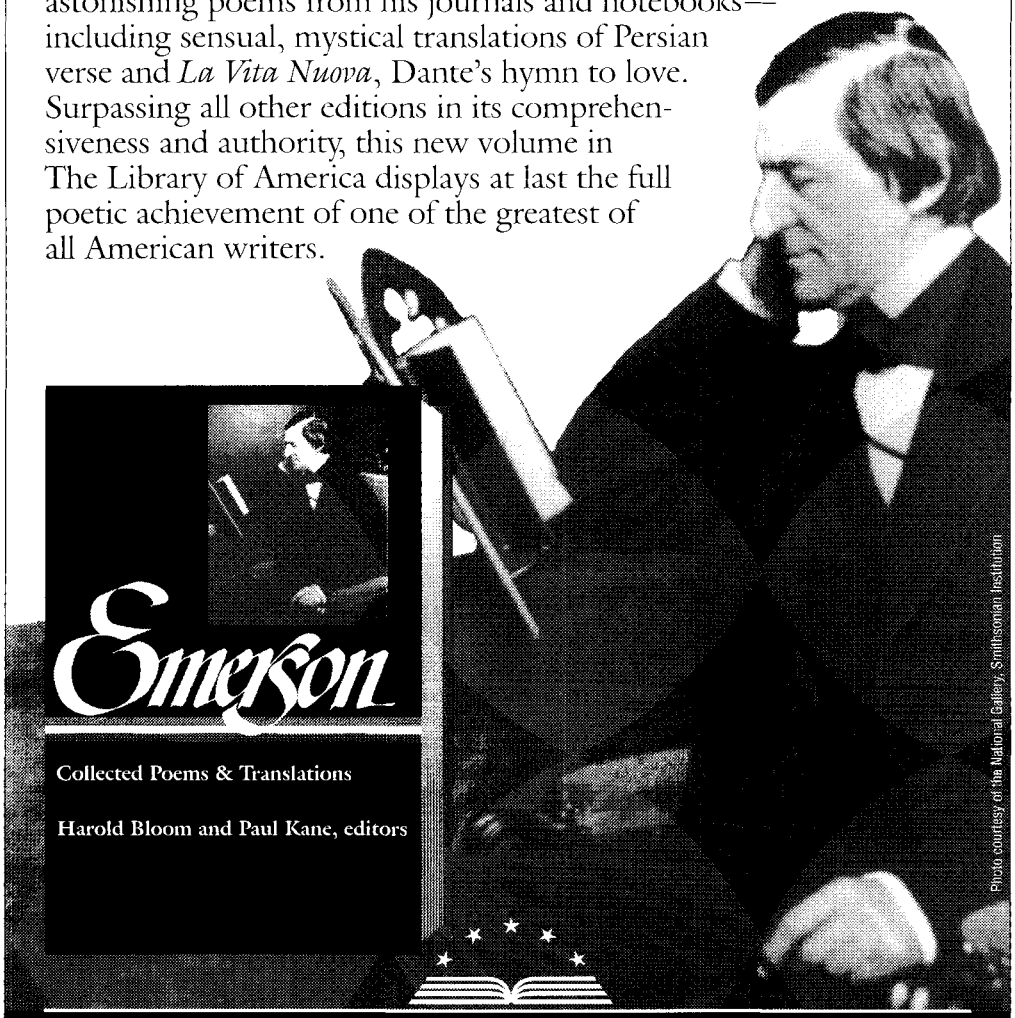

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